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LIVING RELIGIONS  
OF THE WORLD





# LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

by

FREDERIC SPIEGELBERG



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To  
RÖSLI  
*For Being*

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# PREFACE

THE MAIN CONCERN OF THIS BOOK IS TO INCLUDE SUFFICIENT factual, sociological, and historical material, in a subject often notoriously without dates, to provide adequate guideposts without at the same time cluttering the discussion with superfluous or distracting detail. For this procedure the author had two reasons. First, the book is designed as a survey of contemporary religions, not as a complete compendium of any one of them. Second, it seemed more important to deal with the nature and development of the religious impulse itself, than to describe meticulously some or several creeds. The subject of the book is the nature of that religious impulse and of what happens to it, under varying cultural conditions, as it solidifies into a creed.

Few of the world's living religions are completely autochthonous. Most of them betray many mingled influences. In general, however, we have on the one hand the Semitic-Judaic-Christian tradition in the West. This tradition includes Mohammedanism, that faith which derives both from East and West, but which conquered part of the former and was forced to give up its conquests in the latter. On the other hand, we have the religions of the Orient, a great many of which are an extension of, reaction against, or intermingling with those extremely ancient primitive religious practices that the Aryans brought with them when they invaded India. The general background of our own Occidental world we may be presumed to know fairly well. The general background of the Oriental world we do not. Therefore this book commences and deals at some length with India, for much that we have to say would be incomprehensible did it not.

Comparative religion, in common with all comparative studies, is extremely diverse, not only in its subject matter but in its ap-

proach. It is essential to realize that it is a comparative study, devoted to the consideration of relationships and similarities, as well as differences, and that it is free of moral bias. It is concerned on the one hand with the nature of that impulse that animates religion; and on the other, with the form, ceremonial, ritual, and social organization to which that impulse gives rise. It is perhaps a pity that it is usually more concerned with the first than with the second; but the first is elusive, and the second within the measurable boundaries of the factual. It is the intent of this book to deal primarily with the first in terms of the second.

Today, when we approach the subject, we can automatically clear away a vast underbrush of material that for us has passed from the realm of the unknowable into the realm of the knowable. This transition is particularly true when we deal with primitive religions and with the primitive origins of religions, which subsequently become extremely abstruse and sophisticated in their thought. The subject matter of faith is the unknowable; but it becomes confused with the merely factually unknowable or unknown, which of course varies from age to age. Yet, if we were in imagination to project the study of theology back to the time of Herodotus, we would see approximately the same process of comparative evaluation going on, on the basis of what was then considered the subject matter of religion, the unknowable; and if we pushed it back even further than that, to some stone age community, at least in theory the subject would still deal with the same type of subject matter, if not with the same amount of it.

It is extremely important to remember that the subject matter of religion is the nature of the unknowable, for in looking back on cultures more naive than our own, we perceive the gap between what is unknowable to us and what was unknowable to them, and mark whatever fills the gap as superstition. We should remember that it was not superstition at the time; and that in future ages our attitude towards our own gap will be subject to the same leveling charge.

As we study the religions of the modern civilized world, of which there are, in general outline, surprisingly few, we immediately become aware of one outstanding phenomenon—that the Occident and the Orient are apt to conceive the basic concepts of which the human

mind is capable in diametrically opposed ways. The absolutely basic concepts that make thought possible to us at all and that are the elementary tools of mental investigation are extremely few in number, but they are indispensable. They deal with such ideas as mass, direction, volume, cause, finality, and number. For instance, if we do not know that to the Egyptians our up was their down and their down our up, because of the direction of flow of the Nile, we shall have considerable difficulty in understanding some of their notions of cause and effect.

We said earlier that, from the modern standpoint of knowledge and insight, comparative religion as a study is liable automatically to clear away much underbrush, matter peripheral to the problem of religion, but not its central concern. This is not to say that we have no underbrush of our own. We might also define the religious impulse as the worship of those things we believe to be true about the ultimate nature of things, which no amount of reason, proof, or even emotional self-doubt, can persuade us to disbelieve. Each of us retains many of these, inherited from whatever faith we were brought up in. Whatever our attitude towards these beliefs may be in the light of reason, they are firmly wedged in our subconscious minds and so color all our thinking. There are also the -isms of our day, all designed to evoke emotional belief, of which the less said the better. Some of these are political, and therefore dangerous to our bodies. Others are ideological, and therefore dangerous to our minds. The difference between science, a discipline, and scientism, an irrational belief, is vast.

Unfortunately, ultimate values are indefinable, but the ways in which we seek to express them are not. There is no substitute for insight; but if we can at least agree that insight exists, we have accomplished much. We are concerned here with the *fact* of the existence of such values, and also the ways in which a realization of the fact of their existence has taken shape in dogma, belief, and methods of attaining spiritual insight, according to the particular society involved. It is as if the ineffable were a fluid which, though it by no means changes its nature in the process, yet takes the shape of the vessel into which it is poured. By comparing the shapes of the various vessels, we may be able to cancel out those apparent shapes which the ultimate assumes on various levels and in various cultural



matrixes, and so be left with the fluid and ultimate substance of belief, a universal and unvarying thing common to all faiths, peoples, and times.

It is needless to say that a faith is valid for those who believe it. It is holy to them and therefore should be respected by us. Besides, it provides a social discipline that facilitates the smooth working of a society. But any organized religion is essentially a piece of social, rather than spiritual machinery, a machinery, however, that is based upon spiritual insight. The more we strip away the social machinery, the more we perceive that the faith which is its fuel is common to all faiths.

So it is our purpose to explore the nature of an experience common to all men and to set forth the form that that experience may take. This form is conditioned by the social pattern of the society in which the great prophets, or originators, lived their lives. Yet such an investigation must be pursued with empathy. To see a system from the outside is by no means to experience it from within, and this gap between learning and experiencing must never be lost sight of. It is not the object of the study of comparative religion to demolish the underbrush of any faith, for the underbrush is essential to the balance of life within the forest. But it is the object of comparative religion to discover a kinship among the community of trees. The seventeenth century English poet, Henry Vaughan, speaks of a forest as "continuous trees." It is the intent of this book to establish such a continuity.

Unfortunately, in purely temporal terms, this continuity is at the mercy of the course of world history, so something must be said about the organization of this book. Were it not for Islam, we could treat the two cultural mainstreams of the Occident on the one hand and the Orient on the other in an orderly fashion. It seemed better, under the circumstances, to ignore the place of Islam in the development of Hindu thought, insofar as that place occurs historically, and to place those religions whose common ancestor is to a certain extent Zarathustrianism after a discussion of that religion. This method has certain disadvantages, since it defers a discussion of the impact of Islam upon India and the rise of Sikhism, but of the various organizational methods that are possible, it perhaps seemed the simplest.

F. S.

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LIVING RELIGIONS  
OF THE WORLD



# I. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

## *The Object of Religion*

COMPARATIVE RELIGION AS A MEANS OF IMPARTIAL STUDY IS a recent branch of knowledge, for formerly, inquirers in this field were more concerned with the problems of their own faith than with the nature of faith in general. Science and faith, which operate, as we shall see, in separate realms, were once seen to be mutually contradictory. Thus we have in Western culture the symbol of Faustus, the man who has sold his soul in return for knowledge and who is therefore damned. The Faustus legend is of late medieval origin, and with the slow rise of science it came to be interpreted in various ways. Marlowe's *Faust* is utterly damned by his search for knowledge:

Regard his hellish fall,  
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise,  
Only to wonder at unlawful things,  
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits  
To practice more than heavenly power permits.<sup>1</sup>

But by the time we reach the *Faust* of Goethe, we are confronted by the philosophical man who is tolerant and somewhat wistful about the problem of faith, chiefly regretting that his search for power, knowledge, and truth forms for him a barrier to that degree of belief which comforts others. Thus in the sixteenth scene of *Faust*, Part I, we have the following dialogue:

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*.

*Margaret:*

Please tell me, Heinrich . . .

*Faust:*

Anything you wish.

*Margaret:*

Tell me, how do you feel about religion?

You are a very good man,

However I feel you don't think very highly of it.

*Faust:*

Let us not talk of that, my child.

You know that I love you

And for my dear ones I would give body and soul.

I do not want to deprive anyone of his faith and Church.

.....

.....

*Margaret:*

Do you believe in God?

*Faust:*

My darling, who can say: I believe in God.

You may ask priests or sages

And their answer will seem mockery of him who asks.

*Margaret:*

Then you do not believe?

*Faust:*

Do not misunderstand me, my darling.

For who can possibly name Him;

Who can possibly say: I believe in Him?

Who can possibly say: I do not believe in Him,

The all-container, the all-sustainer?

Does He not carry and feed you, me, and Himself?

Is not the sky there over us?

Is not the earth secure beneath our feet?

And do not the eternal stars ascend in friendly smiles?

Do we not look into each other's eyes?

And does not everything in you also aspire to highest heaven?

And is not everything around you also so inspired, though invisibly,

And isn't your heart ready to burst with the joy of all that?

And since that feeling makes you full of bliss,

It does not matter what name you give it:

Call it bliss, heart, love, God.

I myself have no name for it.

For the feeling is all that counts, and names are but noises and smoke  
beclouding the effulgence of Heaven.

*Margaret:*

All that sounds fine and good.

The preacher, in his own way, also says such things, but the way is  
somewhat different.

*Faust:*

All men so say,

Though each in his own language, so why not I in mine?

This extract shows the attitude of an 18th century gentleman and deist, but it also represents the residue of the inexplicable to be discovered when we have removed the ritual machinery of any dead faith, and the original insight from which most religions, and all major contemporary systems of belief, have developed. It has been given many names. In this book we shall refer to it as the Miracle of Being, for we, too, find it necessary to speak of these matters, in our own day, "with slightly different phrases." To accomplish our purpose, we must explore the doctrine and practice of many different faiths.

By western standards there is nothing either unusual or dangerous in making available to the public a book about such things. On the contrary, we take it for granted that wisdom grows with information, and that therefore nothing but good can come of communicating knowledge to as many people as possible. When it comes to religious knowledge, the Christian feels it his sacred duty to give such things as wide a hearing as possible.

This attitude, however, is far from being universal. For instance, the approach of an orthodox exponent of Hinduism, a pandit or guru, is quite the reverse. Instead of going out of his way to collect as many disciples as possible, he guards his doctrine with the utmost reserve, accepting only that handful of students whose desire for knowledge he has found sincere by rigorous test. He holds this attitude for two reasons. First, he believes that knowledge is power and that power is not to be trusted to those who are spiritually or morally unfit to use it. Second, the Hindu philosophy of karma has one double-edged exception. In general karma implies that every man must eat the fruits of his own actions; that whatever a man does will have consequences that he will have to bear; and that everything that happens to him is the inevitable result of his former thoughts, emotions, and dreams, as well as of his deeds either in his present incarnation or some previous one. But the guru assumes the burden not only of his own actions, but also of those of his students, whose karma will be added to his own. Naturally, in view of this responsibility, he will accept only those pupils who have been carefully chosen for their probity, for it is hard enough for a man to



bear his own karma, let alone that of others. For such reasons the ashrams, or spiritual schools of India, tend to be extremely small.

I mention this viewpoint at the onset to make clear that the study of religious doctrines is a far from harmless pursuit. Even to read about them, without the least intention of putting them into practice, can have serious consequences, for the very ideas, let alone their execution, affect our minds in unexpected and unpredictable ways. We are familiar enough with the disastrous consequences of coming too close to radioactive substances while pursuing scientific research. Similarly, the dangers of a course in political science can be very real dangers indeed. We tend to forget that the exposure of our minds to religious ideas entails even greater risk. Religious ideas, after all, have moved and changed the world more profoundly than any bomb or political ideology.

In this connection a Czechoslovakian novelist once wrote a story about a German professor who specialized in Tibetan studies. The professor was everything a German professor should be; thorough in his subject, oblivious to all else, and certain of the absolute virtues of the scientific method. He was minutely preoccupied with the phonetics of the Tibetan language, and in particular with its pronunciation in the eighth and ninth centuries. After many years of study he found that only a few words eluded him, and these happened to include a magical formula whose enunciation had the property of turning those who heard it correctly uttered into purple jellicones. This, of course, was nonsense, but still the professor wished to discover the phonetics of the key word in the formula, which eluded him. He spent years consulting ancient rhyming dictionaries and collated every use of the word he could discover. At last he appeared before his class in a mood of pedantic triumph and announced to his students that he had at last discovered the correct pronunciation of the elusive word. His happiness was profound. The syllable was *gastop*, and he illustrated it and the formula with relish. The reaction to his discovery was distinctly disappointing, and thinking that perhaps in his enthusiasm he had started his lecture before his students had assembled, he glanced at the room over the top of his glasses. On each seat was a quivering purple jellicone.

The moral, needless to say, is that we should be beware of what the French call *la miserable vanité des savants*—of the pitiable

pride of pedants such as our professor, who imagined that religious and magical formulas are of interest only to the anthropologist; for the scholar is too apt to regard an interest in the content as well as in the form of a religion to be an obstacle to sound scholarship and as such regrettable. We should not confound indifference and tolerance, nor should we forget that all ideas have consequences; words, particularly religious words, have a certain power. Surely most of us are aware of the strange discomfort, the queer emotional impact that the solemn utterance of such words as "God," "Our Heavenly Father," and "Jesus Christ" evokes. We may well discover that there are other words, such as Brahman or tao, which will work upon our minds in ways stranger still. Remembering that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and that specialized knowledge is often the enemy of insight, we must keep in view the tremendous potentiality of religious ideas if we are to venture safely upon them.

In addition, the study of comparative religions has been looked upon as dangerous for reasons quite other than those just stated. For many centuries orthodox Christian circles have regarded it as a suspect subject, for some theologians have seriously objected to the identification of anything save Christianity as a religion. It is not at all unusual to encounter the view that the entire science of comparative religion is in this sense impious, insofar as it places Christianity upon a par with Buddhism or Hinduism, implying that Christianity is only one, but not the One, among faiths. It is characteristic of such a standpoint to insist that Christianity is nothing if it is not unique. Other religions have claimed the same distinction for themselves. It is only natural that those who feel this way should also feel that the study of comparative religion imperils their unique status, for it does. It shows nothing more clearly than that no claim is more ignorant, questionable, or ridiculous than the claim that any idea is unique. Solomon was correct in saying that there was nothing new under the sun. Again and again the pride of the ingenious creative mind in some new idea is crushed by the discovery that it is not new. That the validity of any idea should be in any way diminished by its lack of novelty is a proposition more proper to psychology than to logic.

The great Swiss psychologist, C. G. Jung, has pointed out that the first session of a course of psychotherapeutic treatment involves the

patient in a peculiar disappointment, which he terms "a double disappointment." The alarmed patient reveals what are, to him, unusual and outlandish symptoms uniquely his. After a few minutes the analyst is able to say, "Oh, but there is nothing strange or outlandish in all this. You are almost exactly what we call type "AB." A person with your symptoms will have these other symptoms, which you haven't mentioned yet." For the patient this is a double disappointment, the first part of which is positive, for the patient discovers that he is not alone in his state of mind, and so begins to believe that after all he may not be going insane. It is important for us to remember that none of us, however peculiar in his inner feelings or imagination, is unique, but that many others are in precisely the same state. The second part of the disappointment is negative, for the patient is disappointed to realize that what to him were unique symptoms were to the analyst quite ordinary manifestations. One has but to study anthropology and mythology to find prototypes for enough freaks or monsters of the imagination to crowd a lifetime.

Similarly, there is nothing really novel in religions or in philosophical invention. When we consider the endless hours and years that Christian contemplatives and Indian pandits of great subtlety have devoted to the problems of theology and metaphysics, it is unlikely that we, who devote only an odd hour to such matters, will discover anything that someone else has not already turned over in his mind. It is a mark of sound erudition to recognize the unlikelihood of one's being able to propose a genuinely novel religion or, for that matter, so much as a new exegesis of a single verse of a single religious text.

This fact does not prevent "new" religions from sprouting all the time. Our own age has raised a crop of them as diverse as perhaps at any time since the Roman Empire. However, not one of them is actually new, despite the fact that sheer novelty is sometimes their only claim to fame. For example there is Existentialism. To its followers it appears in the guise of a religion. The acknowledged source of existentialist doctrine is Martin Heidegger. No one would deny that Heidegger has something to say to our age and that his is one of the best minds of the existentialist movement. Yet that movement is by no means as new as he and others of his kind suppose it to be, even though it is deeply intuitive and goes far beyond the

horizon of rational intellectuality, two things that set it apart from most other contemporary systems.

Heidegger has made a most effective criticism of all classical systems of metaphysics and of rationalized "world-explanation." He has shown that every such system is a texture of generalized abstractions that, as abstractions, neglect the most important essential reality of life, that "here-and-now" moment in which we live and that is the one truly concrete experience we know, insofar as we can touch, handle, and see it at first hand. Heidegger applies this criticism to the various systems of religious doctrine and dogma, finding them to be preoccupations with vague "mystical" notions far removed from the tremendous immediacy of the one reality we actually do know, the "here-and-now."

This idea is the core of existentialist belief, which Heidegger states well, but it is not new. He might be quoting from a dozen or more scholastic or mystic theologians of the Middle Ages, men who likewise insisted that the *hic et nunc* was the whole object of philosophy, metaphysics, and of religion; men such as Meister Eckhart:

The Now-moment in which God made the first man and the Now-moment in which the last man will disappear, and the Now-moment in which I am speaking are all one in God, in whom there is only one Now. Look! The person who lives in the light of God is conscious neither of time past nor of time to come but only of one eternity. . . . Therefore he gets nothing new out of future events, nor from chance, for he lives in the Now-moment that is, unfailingly, "in verdure newly clad."<sup>2</sup>

Again and again we shall return to this here-and-now in our study of the religions of Mankind, for, if we do not, we run the danger of becoming abstractionists and hence out of touch with the immediate reality of that which has ever been the decisive object of every religion deserving the name.

It may sound as though I were about to propose a definition of religion. I am not. To do so would be a fatal error, for religion is utterly indefinable, as is its object. That object, the subject-matter of belief, is that here-and-now reality which vanishes into the past as soon as we try to pin it down. For definition is an *a posteriori* act. As soon as something is stated it becomes a part of the past. It is

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond Bernard Blakney, *Meister Eckhart* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), pp. 209-210.

inert and so immutable. Only the past is immutable. The present and the future, in being always capable of alteration, cannot be defined. *Omnis determinatio est negatio*: every definition is negation, for the only things that can be defined are words, and words, in their turn, symbolize, but never define, the real world.

Religions are manifold and multiform. The more we know about them, the less we are able to state clearly their common denominator. Yet though we cannot state, through careful study we may come to feel or intuit that essential element which distinguishes a religion from such pseudo-religions as Communism, Nazism, and Psychologism. Pseudo-religions have the visible outward trappings, but not the inner content, of great and true religions such as Hinduism, Judaism, or Christianity.

In passing, we may ask ourselves why the great pseudo-religions of our day are not true ones, despite the fact that some of their more fanatic adherents believe them to be so. The reason may be that such doctrines are essentially systems of social control primarily organized for the benefit of some special group and that they are concerned with the physical condition of man to all exclusion of his spiritual condition. At their best they are no better than a sort of Confucianism, the higher etiquette of a small ruling clique. The only goals they seek are temporal, and indeed by their nature they cannot permit of religious experience, for they attempt to control society by defining it in absolute temporal terms. Whether they wish to or not, they are compelled out of self-preservation to deny the existence of that which they cannot control by definition. And religious experience is indefinable.

It is indefinable, but also, since we can apprehend it, it must have a nature and a content. Obviously this content is beyond either intellection or verbal definition, but since we must call it something, in this book it will be called the Miracle of Being. It is the *hic et nunc*. Yet the Miracle of Being could easily become a mere glib formula, to be tossed around in common with such terms as "spirituality," "the Divine," "The ultimate reality," or "The Power beyond Ourselves." What we mean by the Miracle of Being has nothing to do with such so-called "miracles." Miracles in the plural, with which all religions abound, are only the folklore of the ultimate. Ordinary miracles are essentially phenomenological. They are inexplicable exceptions to what we consider to be natural laws governing the

physical world and its events. Such exceptions to the rules of life provide a break in the otherwise secular tedium of daily life. Such historical abnormalities and misfits so fascinate some people's attention that they become occultists, and run after ghosts in an effort to conjure up the souls of the dead, as though the dead had anything more to say about the Being of Being than have the living.

The Miracle of Being, or the Being of Being, exists in the singular, and is beyond such accidental events. Pursuit of specific miracles is the easiest way to miss *the* Miracle, for the Miracle is not to be found in such exceptions to the laws of nature, being in itself the law of nature, if by law we mean the essential condition. The great religious traditions, as we shall see, emphasize this point time and again.

Then what is *the* Miracle? Primarily it is the simple fact that we are, that the whole complex that we call the World is and has being. For this complex we call the World might not have existed at all. Indeed, there are those who claim that it does not. For them the Miracle of Being takes the negative form, or the obverse of the medal. Being to them is so implausible, so improbable, that in a way it would seem easier and simpler to have had Nothing, though in actuality we cannot conceive of nothing without reference to something. Yet here we are, in the midst of what we can only clumsily call "Isness."

Of course we could avoid this whole issue by analyzing it away; by going into detail; by thinking about the different kinds of being, the visible, audible, or tactile. Such a procedure is not without interest, but that interest is a special one. It is not so catholic, so thrilling, so disturbing, as is the primary fact that there is Being. We can readily agree that this Being is common to all things. We can suppose that all things are common to it. But if we do grant that it exists in all the things we know; and that a part of all the things we know are part of it, then we have to take the further step that though it is particular to all things and all things are particular to it but are not in their total the nature of it, then it must have a nature of its own.

This is a logical approach. But if, by following the standard scientific procedure, you may reduce the Being of the world to its most minute constituents of molecules, atoms, protons and neutrons, and still be left with one question unanswered that the scientific method



cannot answer, then that unanswered question must be beyond the realm of the scientific method. Science may tell us how a thing is, but it cannot tell us what it is. It can merely give the thing a name. When you have reached the point beyond which definition is impossible, you cannot say what it is that lies beyond that point. In this area remains the Miracle underlying the lesser miracles of the scientific world. Unlike miracles in the plural, the miraculousness of the Miracle cannot be perceived by opposing it to some natural law or scientific datum. There are no data to which it may be related, for it does not exist in the realm of data. It is the Miracle of Being because in resembling none of the miracles that we have known, it is unique.

The trouble with explanations is that, in being limited to the phenomena they take into account, they cannot deal with evidence beyond their scope. They are of value only within the frame of reference of their own terminology or point of view. Thus in some other point of view they become irrelevant. The "world formula," the theory that appears to unify the sciences and to explain the universe, which seems to be emerging from the later researches of the late Albert Einstein, is never anything more than a description of shapes, motions, distances, weights, and energies, though so accurate as to enable us to predict what they will do under various possible circumstances. Such a theory can exist only when we assume the existence of the things with which it deals. The nature of the quality of existence that these things share in common is not examined, and indeed the theory of their existence, in dealing solely with an end-product, cannot deal with the process that brought them into existence, or with the cause of that process. This world formula thus assumes being, without any consideration for the unusual circumstance that there is any being to measure or describe.

One does not at all dispose of the Miracle or problem of what being is, by saying that the question is illogical or unanswerable. Every science, every system of thought, must have at least one indefinable axiom or premise as its basis. There is no such thing as a closed system of thought capable of giving a strict definition of its own axioms. Just as I cannot explain in writing exactly how the letters of the alphabet should be pronounced, words and thoughts cannot communicate or express the full reality of the world that they describe. In the words of a Buddhist poem:

It is a sword that cuts, but cannot cut itself,  
It is an eye that sees, but cannot see itself.

6

"It," in this context, is the indefinable basis, whether we call it the "mind" as the basis of all experience or Being as the basis of all being. "It" is the Miracle. "It" is what Heidegger would call the "existential moment"; and this is no other than the final content and "object" of all great religions.

It is interesting to note that Buddhist poem and Einstein alike, when dealing with such matters, are forced to use metaphor and simile. Because this Miracle is ineffable, it can be described in no other way, for metaphor and simile are the figures of speech that allow us, however imperfectly, to deal with experience outside our own knowledge of experience. You will therefore find that both occur often in the part of religious literature that deals with the Miracle of Being.

Religions are in one sense man's attempt to express the underlying wonder of the inexpressible, of Being itself, beyond all its particular shapes and characteristics. We may ask why religion is necessary for this task, since it might seem that "It" is the one most obvious thing in the world. Indeed, so many of the great religious teachers of Mankind have stated time after time that "It"—The Miracle of Being, God, Being, Brahman—is almost more than self-evident. "God," say the Christian mystics, "is nearer to us than we are to ourselves."

To see the Miracle is, in the words of the Buddhist Hyakujo, "like looking for an ox when you are riding on one." In the final analysis, what men seek is that which seeks, or, according to St. Bernard, *nemo te quaerere valet nisi quod prius invenerit*—no one is able to seek thee unless he has first found thee. But to this precept, the same teachers have added the paradox that just as the Miracle is the most obvious thing in the world, so is it the hardest of all to see. In another Zen Buddhist text we hear that "It is too clear, and so it takes long to see."

The problem we face here is that what is most obvious is the easiest to forget and overlook. Man, as we know him today, seems able to go on living year after year without ever pausing to gape in wonder at the sheer miracle of existence itself. He lives as if all the world around him were simply a matter of course, a thing to be taken for granted, a part of humdrum familiarity that is nothing to get excited about. We exist, he says, so what?



Such strange forgetfulness of basic reality, such terrible insensitivity to the miraculous, may well be called a Fall, or original sin, as mythological language would have it. Man forgets to such an extent that he runs around like a squirrel chasing its own tail.

He is born and brought up; he goes to school and college; he matures and reaches adulthood; he works at a job in order to go on working; he gets married in order to bear children who will go through the same thing all over again; he dies. What is all this about? Where are we going and why? We do not ask ourselves such questions, for they are subversive and disturb the social order. We feel it is better to keep our minds on the trivial chores of the day, on the worries and economic problems of the next few years; and that it is not wise for us to brood too much about the fact that the world will one day come to an end and that long before that happens Man as a race will be extinct. We prefer to forget that, and our subconscious orders us to forget it. Such thoughts seem to us morbid and inevitably to lead to the mental clinic.

Healthy-minded people, we believe, do not think such thoughts. Above all things we like to see ourselves as healthy-minded. When we turn over the brightly colored pages of *Life* or *The Saturday Evening Post* we see everybody in the advertisements riding in cars; cooing over washing machines; and exulting in saunforized shirts. Everyone is happy; everyone smiles; and everyone is fifteen to thirty years old, healthy, ruddy-cheeked, having a swell time, and preserved from grief by Monuments of Eternity and air foam mattresses. Occasionally an old timer, leaning on a stick, stands aside to watch the crowd, but only occasionally. The end of it all is carefully and decorously hidden. It is comfortable and snug. But it is not secure. A second look is enough to convince us that the happy life so advertised is sheer, unadulterated boredom. It is a charge-account world in which the future is anchored down only by installments and the present is in the hands of the repair man. Yet we seem strangely able to forget that the whole fascination of life lies in our ability to live on a thin crust laid over a fathomless abyss of mystery. We are beautifully afloat, but on a deceptively quiet sea. Dr. Samuel Johnson is not usually regarded as a religious man, though he was one. His favorite term of opprobrium was that this man or that had "no bottom," referring to the old fashioned copper sheathing on wooden boats that protected them from parasites and

from decay, and that did much to keep them afloat. He was a man of common sense. Yet all his life he maintained a spiritual bottom that did much to keep him afloat.

The story of the world's great religions will bring us back again and again to a realization of this ultimate mystery which alone keeps us afloat. Where it does not underlie our lives in mind as it does in fact, we have simply missed the whole point of living, indeed "to miss the point" is the literal and proper meaning of the word that we now translate as "sin." In India, whose faiths we shall consider first, the Mystery or Miracle of Being is called Brahman. There is a proverb that says, "If Brahman is known, nothing else needs to be known; if Brahman is not known; nothing else is worth knowing."

When we consider Man's relation to the Miracle of Being we find that human beings fall into two groups, those who are aware of it, and those who are not. In many religious vocabularies the latter are referred to as being in a state of "forgetfulness" or "ignorance" (in Sanskrit, *avidya*, or unconsciousness); and the former as being in a condition of "realization" or "awakening." Almost all religions seem to contain a duality of this kind, either opposing ignorance and enlightenment or damnation and salvation, depending upon their moral viewpoint. As we shall see, in the later stages of religious development this dualism is often resolved by the discovery that it is more apparent than real. Thus in Mahayana Buddhism the truly awakened man realizes that *bodhi* (enlightenment) and *klesa* (beclouding passions) are not to be clearly differentiated.

In order to begin our examination of the nature of religion we must establish the nature of these two states and then attempt to differentiate between them. The difference was most effectively demonstrated by Gurdjieff, a Russian mystic well known to certain circles in Paris, London, and New York in the period between the two World Wars.<sup>3</sup>

It was Gurdjieff's habit to begin his lectures with a period of silence. This silence was not the familiar "crouching silence" people often affect at the beginning of a church service in an attempt to achieve humility. Gurdjieff's method was to look keenly at his audience individually for about five minutes, for as long, that is, as any-

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<sup>3</sup>For some account of this man, see Rom Landau, *God is My Adventure* (London: I. Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1935); and also P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949).

body could bear. It was acutely embarrassing. He would then abruptly announce: "You are all asleep. Unless you wake up at once I am not going to give any lecture at all, because you wouldn't understand the first word of it. Wake Up!"

He was using more than the usual shock tactics of good lecture platform technique. In addition, it was a way of making a point we must understand before we can comprehend the essential concern of the great spiritual conditions. To the religious, the state of forgetfulness is one of being asleep even while we are awake, so that, hypnotized by the repetitious nature of our daily lives, we could not act to free ourselves from the daily round. Even psychologically speaking, the possible states of Man's consciousness are by no means confined to what we ordinarily call sleeping and waking. Between the day and the night of the mind there are many twilight zones.

From about 11 P.M. until about 7 A.M. we are in a state of unconsciousness, usually visited by dreams. From 7 A.M. until 11 P.M. we are in a decidedly different state, the one we call being awake. The two states are so different that passing from the former to the latter is a distinct shock. Our body twists with a jerk and our breathing changes abruptly. In order to reach the threshold of consciousness, the body has to make radical physiological adjustments. The process is not unlike being born again. Suddenly, there we are. We open our eyes, and find the world whole, vivid in color, distinct in shape, and firm to the touch. Whatever was there before we do not know. Whatever existed for us in our state of dream consciousness has been wiped out and supplanted. We have come out of the gloomy, cavernous state of sleep into a world bright and alive. Chuang Tzu's parable, in which he could not decide whether he was a man dreaming he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was a man, has no reality for us once we reach full consciousness. We know absolutely that we are awake.

Religious awareness is of the same certainty. Great as is the difference between sleeping and waking, the difference between ignorance and enlightenment is even greater. The religious realizes the Miracle of Being with the same positiveness that he realizes he is awake.

But ordinarily we are far from aware that what we call reality, or being, is so strange and mysterious that it silences thought. We

do not tell ourselves that now we are, yet might easily not be. We tell ourselves that, if at all, only in the brief moment when we make the transition between sleeping and waking. But we also feel it, from time to time, when suddenly our senses become more acute, so that, made aware of the world, we perceive in a startling way, we give some thought to the Miracle of Being.

If you have ever had your eyes diluted with belladonna during the course of an eye examination and then gone into a sunlit street, you will have some idea of what awakened consciousness might mean, whether that consciousness be physical or spiritual. The sensation is overwhelming, agreeable, and terrifying. Various races at various times have used drugs to produce the same effect. Aldous Huxley, in *The Doors of Perception*, has cited the Mexican use of the drug mescaline. The terrifying aspect of the experience is worth stressing, for awareness, or realization of the Miracle of Being, opens an abyss wherein everything meets nothingness, and where the brief reality of our existence is like a tight-rope stretched across a bottomless chasm. Also we must stress the immediacy of the experience, which is overwhelming.

In his recent novel, *The Genius and the Goddess*, Huxley describes the experience of the fascinosa or pleasing reaction to the realization of the Ultimate, as follows:

I remember how he looked at landscapes; and the colors were incomparably brighter, the patterns that things made in space unbelievably beautiful. I remember how he glanced around him in the streets, and St. Louis, believe it or not, was the most splendid city ever built. People, houses, trees, T-model Fords, dogs at lamp posts—everything was more significant. Significant, you may ask, of what? And the answer is: themselves. These were realities, not symbols. Goethe was absolutely wrong. *Alles vergängliche* is NOT a *gleichnis*. At every instant every transience is eternally that transience. What it signifies is its own being, and that being (as one sees so clearly when one's in love) is the same as Being with the biggest possible B. Why do you love the woman you're in love with? Because she *is*. And that, after all, is God's own definition of Himself: I am that I am. The girl is who she is. Some of her isness spills over and impregnates the entire universe. Objects and events cease to be mere representatives of classes and become their own uniqueness; cease to be illustrations of verbal abstractions and become fully concrete. Then you stop being in love, and the universe collapses, with an almost audible squeak of derision, into its normal insignificance. Could it ever *stay* trans-

figured? Maybe it could. Maybe it's just a question of being in love with God. But that is neither here nor there. Or rather it's the only thing that's either here, there, or anywhere; but if we said so, we'd be cut by all our respectable friends and might even end up in the asylum.<sup>4</sup>

This consciousness is as far different from the ordinary drifting along through the daytime world that we call being awake as, in its turn, it is from the world of sleep. Something else also happens. The barriers between the senses, the barriers by means of which we sort experience into various compartments tend to break down.

Having bitten on life like a sharp apple,  
Having felt with fingers that the sky is blue,<sup>5</sup>

says the contemporary poet Louis MacNeice, and that it is precisely. The Miracle of Being informs all the senses equally, and therefore it is perceived by them equally.

Not often do we have either the chance or the ability to enter into such a higher state of awareness. Our senses are not trained to withstand it, and so they shut it off, just as we blink at a light that is too strong for us. We slip off from such awareness easily, or perhaps uneasily, into the sleep called waking, in order to avoid the responsibilities that insight imposes. Therefore we need what might be called a spiritual alarm clock to go off and wake us up even in the midst of our so-called waking life.

Such is the function of religion and its prophets, sages, and symbols. It is their mission to jerk us up to an awareness of the immense reality of reality. The soul, says Kierkegaard, is seventy thousand fathoms down. It is the duty of the sage to surface it for us, which he can do only in the language of our waking dream world. And he has another duty, too. F. Scott Fitzgerald, who spoke, as a novelist, for the general condition of Man, once said that the dark night of the soul comes at three o'clock in the morning. The prophet then has to catch our awareness on the ebb and return it on the flood.

In all ages there have been such spiritual alarm clocks. But, likewise in all ages, both the validity and the possibility of the awakening they produce have been questioned, since the ringing of the

<sup>4</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Genius and the Goddess* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), pp. 60-61.

<sup>5</sup> Louis MacNeice, *Poems 1925-1940* (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 40.

clock often fails in its function. We sometimes sleep through it, too sodden with sleep to waken. Or perhaps the tone is not the right one to wake us, for there are false alarm-clocks without any message, which alarm us only to further their own personal ends. Sometimes they are inaccurate alarm clocks, confused and rusted in their purpose and function, having muddled the awareness of a higher state with strange feelings from the subconsciousness.

Today we are by no means clear as to what comes from above and what comes from below. We see no contradiction in saying that a person has high ideals that are the result of profound thinking, for we have forgotten that profound literally means that which comes from the depths. The ancient Greeks made no such error. To them it made all the difference whether our judgements derived from a contact with the Olympian spirits above, the *proteroi*, or from the *hysteroi*, or subterranean spirits who governed the subconscious, and from whose name we derive our word hysteria. No Greek would have fallen into our confusion between that experience which has its source in the "upper waters" and that which flows from the "nether waters"; between the superconscious and the subconscious, whose separate functions modern psychotherapy lumps together as the Unconscious. It is as though one might say that the Nile and Mississippi are both rivers and therefore identical, omitting to mention that they flow through different countries, in opposite directions, to empty into widely separated seas.

Awakening to the Miracle of Being is the one and only true subject of all religions. In particular we might say that it is the original content of all religions. All else is framework and decoration. This statement is a very definite one, and it has sometimes been said that the establishment of a universal is an example of something called "typical refugee theology," and thus out of place in any culture that has roots of its own. By refugee theology is meant the spiritual standpoint of someone who does not feel deeply at home in any society, a feeling not at all uncommon in our age of displaced people.

Allow me to state, then, that of course what is discussed here is refugee theology, for to deal with the Miracle of Being no other theology would help us in the least. I suppose the alternative to refugee theology would be autochthonous or stay-at-home theology. Your stay-at-home is chiefly concerned with the upkeep and im-



provement of his own property. He weeds his garden occasionally and rearranges the furniture in the living room. He believes in keeping up appearances. He is much concerned about what his neighbors think of him. He is more likely to choose his curtains for their appearance from the street than for their effect from within. In short he is more likely to be interested in the forms and practices, in the casuistry of religion, than in its inner meaning. He is so used to valuing all his spiritual furniture that were there a fire, he would probably not be able to make up his mind what it was most essential for him to save from the conflagration, and would keep out something trivial and of no use.

On the other hand the refugee theologian has no baggage but himself. Having saved only that, he is forced to ask himself what there is of value in him, that he should save himself. He has lost all his household goods, his doctrines, ceremonies, forms, his complete set of the Church Fathers in white vellum, *Acta Bolandistica*, complete sermons of John Wesley, and what have you. He has lost all the trappings of faith but not belief itself. Therefore he is forced to consider essentials. In this sense, if we have lost the outward forms of religion because we no longer believe in them, then we are all refugees.

In addition, the term "refugee theology" is a term of opprobrium. It applies less to the theology than to the theologian. Specifically it refers to those who in our day were forced to flee from political conditions in their own country, and who could bring with them no baggage but the imponderable and essential. Let us consider the plight of such a theologian. In order to escape at all, he had to conceal the fact that he was fleeing, so he could leave with at most a few suitcases, as though for a short trip. Thus he was compelled to reduce his possessions to the minimum.

What would he take? Furniture, new or antique, was out of the question. Space would be precious. It could not be taken up by family photographs, personal souvenirs, or anything inessential. Instead he took what valuables could be transformed into the necessities of life: gold, jewelry, small objects of art. Books were too heavy, so only those indispensable to his profession could be included. In short everything was discarded but that which could be turned into the power to survive. When we are forced to strip down to the bare essentials, it is perhaps only then that we discover what

are the bare essentials, of survival, of existence, and even of faith. Such is the difference between the refugee and the stay-at-home theologian. Your refugee theologian, who has been forced to turn his back on the comforts of the established, is interested in what is essential to spiritual survival. Your stay-at-home theologian is more concerned with the properties of his faith than with his own spiritual condition.

Today the whole world is in the spiritual equivalent of this refugee condition. We are rapidly moving away from traditions and former ways of life that, in a few years, will be no more than distant memories. The sudden developments of technology are changing our life beyond recognition. We are passing into an era of unknown experiences, call it the atomic age, or what you will. All that we can carry with us from the past is the essential, the things without which men cannot live. And to cross the border safely, we will need some sort of passport that all men will recognize, some belief that has a universal currency.

When we think about this transition in terms of religion and theology, this parting with the past forces us to consider with unusual candor just what is essential in religion and what is merely ornamentation. We do not want to take the wrong things. Yet how many of us would like to carry forward towards eternity childhood memories of church services we attended, complete with the nostalgic echoes of familiar hymns and prayers? How many of us would like to preserve the grand, cathedral-like structures of doctrine and dogma inherited from the master theologians of Medieval Christianity? But we must consider that when our attachment to these things is chiefly nostalgia, then they are more a part of our past than of our present or future. We can feel nostalgia only for what has been, not for what is. Indeed, so much of the current "return" to old forms of religion is nostalgia, prompted by a fear of the unknown, by a terror of being jolted out of safely familiar ruts of belief, that we must regard that return with severe misgivings. Such nostalgia is not a true belief in the old faiths, but at most a recognition that some kind of belief is necessary to us, whether we believe in it or not. Thus the hermit crab, having no shell of his own, must find what shell he can, in the interests of his own safety.

Not knowing what to do about our predicament, we take the easier, but less secure, method of doing what we have always done,



not realizing that the predicament is more current than the measures we take to deal with it. In the same way, it is said, generals condemn the troops of one war to fight the battles of the previous one.

But what is the essential that we can carry away from the collapse of our traditions? How are we to support ourselves, when we have been foreclosed and forced into spiritual bankruptcy? It would seem that there remains only that nameless Mystery of Being itself, a constant that always surrounds us, though we are aware of it only intermittently. True, there are those who feel that, marvelous though this Mystery may be, it is a mean and trivial substitute for the richness of ancient liturgy. But, as Herbert Read said of contemporary art, which many people take religiously, "You may not like it very much, but it is the only art we have." We have no choice.

There remains the problem of how we are to grasp hold of our choice, how we are to come to grips with this one valid religious experience left to us. For the Mystery of Being cannot be identified other than fleetingly and partially, and it is never identical with our formulations of it. It eludes us. It flows through any sieve of words with which we may try to catch it. We must accustom ourselves therefore to the fact that "new every morning as the sun," life brings us back again and again to this almost ascetically pure and uncomplicated realization of an unknown "it" which underlies all our being, which can be apprehended, but which cannot be comprehended or defined.

In order to understand this one perennial message, and in this sense there is only one, of religious prophets throughout the ages, we have to realize that what we see and know in our life or waking consciousness is never God Himself, but only the traces of God. We cannot find God in the past, for the past, which we know only in memory, is nothing but the dissolving wake of a Present that is also a universal Presence, a Present which is too close for us to see it, just as our eyes are too close to us for us to see them. All that we know for certain is long past and gone. The living and the eternally new is of necessity unknowable, for we can measure it only in terms of the past. Since it is not of the same stuff as the past, it cannot be measured by a standard that does not apply to it, except falsely.

To help us deal with this viewpoint, Zen Buddhism presents us with a parable of the "Ten Stages of Spiritual Oxherding," a series of pictures representing the various phases of Man's spiritual development, or awakening.

The first picture shows a little man alone in a vast landscape. He is bewildered, and we wonder what it is that he wants. He himself does not know. He symbolizes the situation of Mankind, which does not create itself, but which is thrown into reality. He asks what he is doing here, where he is going, whether there is anywhere to go, and what he is supposed to do.

In the second picture the man realizes that he is looking for a lost cow or ox. He has found its tracks on the ground, and these give him some sense of direction in an uncharted landscape. Of course the tracks are not those merely of an ox:

However remote over the hills and far away the beast may wander,  
His nose reaches the heavens and none can conceal it.<sup>6</sup>

As the commentary to the picture explains, they are the doctrines of Buddhism, which, sacred though they be, are only the ephemeral traces of the Truth itself. The man, however, is encouraged.

In the third picture he sees an ox's tail sticking out from behind a great rock. It is as much as he will ever see of the ox; and it is the least essential part, the part that is, in a certain sense, always left behind and that might be cut off without doing any great damage to the ox. Still, if the man had not followed the tracks he would not even have found this much.

In the fourth picture, we learn that the ox, which represents the element of the Divine within us, must be sternly whipped and controlled, if it is to behave properly. "The wild nature is still unruly and altogether refuses to be broken. If the oxherd wishes to see the ox completely in harmony with himself, he is surely to use the whip freely." In the fifth illustration, the oxherd herds the ox. Our thoughts wander and browse capriciously. We must discipline them into order. In the sixth, having subdued himself, the man has found enlightenment, and may safely come home on the ox's back. Having controlled himself, he no longer needs his Self in order to achieve

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<sup>6</sup>Kakuan, a Zen painter and poet of the Sung dynasty, quoted in Daisetz T. Suzuki, *A Manual of Zen Buddhism* (Kyoto: The Eastern Buddhist Society, 1935), p. 153.

freedom from physical desires. Both man and ox vanish from the remaining three pictures.

But basically the Oxherding pictures show us that Man can only glimpse the least essential part of God, and even that after a long search. In the West many have argued that it is not Man's destiny to see God in this life. Our tradition, indeed, is also somewhat vague about the possibility of our seeing Him in the next one. Christianity bases its appeal upon the relative merits of faith and reason.

Unfortunately, as far as we are concerned, the words, and therefore the concepts, of faith and reason have become so rusted and incrustated with contradictory meanings that they are no longer trustworthy instruments for the investigation of anything. Thus the problem of whether faith or reason should prove the better approach to God, once so central to religious dispute in the western world, is central to us no longer.

As a whole, western thinking is dominated by dichotomic thinking and dialectics. It is as incomprehensible to us that Jain logic has a basic syllogism consisting of seven elements, as it is to a Jain that a syllogism should have but two. We are much concerned with "either/or." But "either and or" have, by centuries of accretion, become so much like each other that we can no longer set up a dichotomy between or by means of them. They are useless, as we shall see in the next chapter, for our purposes; therefore we must base our thinking on some other method. Instead of pitting one element against another, to discover truth by observing the differences between the two, as is the habit of the West, we shall consider one thing, and base our thinking upon that. That thing is the Miracle of Being.

In granting the existence of the Miracle of Being we are making a basic assumption. Unlike a logical assumption, which is a basic belief dogmatically stated to be so because it is essential to all further argument, belief in the Miracle of Being is supralogical. In being beyond logic, it is also beyond doubt, and therefore it has the advantage of certainty. Modern scientific inquiry has taught us that the basic assumptions of the phenomenological world are certain only until disproved, so that no system erected upon them is absolutely valid. We thus feel, let us say, about the basic assumptions

of the world we live in, such as the theory of relativity, quite differently than did the Greeks about geometry or the 18th and 19th centuries about Newtonian physics. By being placed in a field of endeavor beyond proof, the Miracle of Being is put beyond doubt. If we believe beyond doubt in the Miracle of Being, it is because we also believe that all being is contained within the Miracle of Being, and since anything new we may develop is also within that framework, then the framework is immune to collapse. The Miracle of Being embraces all being; but logic embraces only what can be perceived or conceived to exist. It is thus at the mercy of new evidence, which the Miracle of Being, in embracing all evidence, is not.

The Miracle of Being is a universal assumption, and therefore has this quality of certainty. No religion will or can survive the present age that cannot claim such ultimate certainty. In short no one religion is eternal to Man, but religion itself is.

Religion so stripped of its specific form is not going to be a matter of sentimental and hazardous attempts to find a sugar coating with which to disguise the nature of the real; or to find a pretty solution designed to console us for our temporary sorrows. For temporary sorrows and joys we need temporary comforts. We are after something more permanent than that.

Such a religion has few personal comforts to offer. We may be sure of nothing that seems sure, but we are at least sure that we are bewildered. Descartes said, *cogito ergo sum*—I think, therefore I am. We never lose consciousness of the fact that, whatever else we may be, at least we are. That we think that we are seems to us to prove that indeed we are. We cannot disprove it, and so we believe it. Such is the Miracle of Being, the essential belief that things are, a belief that nothing can eradicate. Aristotle states in the first book of his *Metaphysics* that the birth of all philosophy, religion, and metaphysical thought is in our wondering what things are about, our bewilderment that things are. This condition is basic; something we can pack in our spiritual suitcase and carry with us, no matter what the circumstances of our voyaging may be. It is a permanent if intermittently conscious condition of Man. Incapable of proof or disproof, the belief that we are is beyond both faith and reason, as today we understand those terms. It is the true residue of all re-

ligious doctrine, but on a secondary level, the history of the western Church is a history of the attempt to prove the existence of God either by faith or by reason alone. We must first examine this attempt.

## 2.

# PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

## *Proofs of the Existence of God*

WHETHER RELIGION IS, OR SHOULD BE, BASED ON FAITH OR on reason has been not only the central problem, but also the chief source of controversy during the entire history of Christian civilization. The problem still exists for us, but we can no longer state it in the terms that were comprehensible 500 years ago, for the meaning of the two terms has vastly changed, as our modern languages have vastly changed since the Scholasticists first employed them.

Today, when we speak of faith or belief, we always mean to imply a certain amount of insecurity. Certainty evades us. Science has rendered even our emotions objective and therefore abstract. It has induced us to believe that knowledge, in being totally divorced from personal or emotional tincture, is alone valid, whereas belief, which to the scientific mind has the drawback of being incapable of objective proof, is invalid. Hence we say "I believe" only when we are not sure.

Before science became a tyranny as well as a mental discipline, this meaning did not exist. Primitive myth, even as codified by the later Greeks, did not contain this element of doubt in belief or in faith. But if today we deal with the phrase "to believe in God," we are apt to surround it with associations that have nothing to do

with the great heritage of Christianity, but are rooted in modern semantic attitudes. These attitudes, in turn, have their origins both in a shift in the ordinary meaning of words and in the countless fundamentalist doctrines whose conflicting definitions have obscured the nature both of belief and of reason. It is ironic that these fundamentalist sects, which consider themselves to be orthodox, are neither orthodox nor fundamentalist, for, as theologians will point out, fundamentalism is nothing but a recent heresy. It is a heresy in that the Christian tradition as a whole has seldom until recently known the stubborn insistence on the letter of doctrine that the Fundamentalists believe essential to Christianity, whereas in actuality it does not occur in the early history of the Church. It might be well to state at this point that by the Church is meant the Christian tradition until the Catholic-Protestant schism of the 16th century.

In our age faith and belief are always accompanied by doubt. Even modern theologians have been confounded by this situation, of which they endeavour to make a virtue. Thus they appeal to the gambling instinct, by claiming that could we be sure of the divine background of reality, we would then have not a religion but a science, which in turn would not satisfy the demands of our soul. Therefore, by implication at least, they seem to feel that a certain risk should be essential to true religious action and speculation. We are thus presented with a secondary belief overlaying the primary belief, for the dogma that risk of uncertainty is essential to basic belief, which is in itself a certainty, distinctly confuses the essential issue of the nature of belief. It is an attitude towards basic belief, rather than an identification of the thing itself.

Such an attitude may allow theologians to continue in the practice of their chosen profession, but it is little or no help to us when we try to approach the problems of faith ourselves.

If the term "faith" has been clouded by sophistry, the term "reason" that we apply to the intellectual process has become equally confused by its modern associative meanings. We do not today speak of reason, that is, of the rational approach to a problem, in the same way as did the medieval theologians. To them the term "intellect" meant much more than it does to us. It embraced both the emotions and the affections, which were deemed capable of intellectual control. From this total concept of the intellectual proc-



ess we have split off only the fragment that allows the mind to deal with objective experience.

Nor, for us, is reason something that can control the whole human personality. We conceive it instead as merely a part of that personality, as the upper stratum only of our waking consciousness. We give it its importance. After all, it has been responsible for all the objective accomplishments of Man. But we are also aware that it is limited in scope, and so does not embrace the entire human consciousness. It has given us our technological devices, but not all our desires can be fulfilled with technological devices; and our attitude towards the world, in being formed by more than reason, cannot be entirely implemented by reason.

Throughout the ages, religions have frequently been victimized by their own tendency to explain themselves in rational terms. Wishing to consolidate their position and power, they have appealed to logic and thus cut the ground out from beneath themselves, for logic cannot deal with the ineffable, and it is the ineffable that is their inner source of vitality. Wherever, among the great prophets and seers, we have found religion most alive, we have never found it attended either by logical argument or by inference alone. The necessity of proving the existence of God, a proof that has always been the pride of theologians, shifts the whole problem of religion into a field, that of the phenomenological, where it does not by its nature belong. For when do you need proof, if not when you are uncertain of something? A proof is weight added to an argument that you consider to be flimsy. And if belief is flimsy, then it is not belief.

Let us say that I walked through a field this morning in order to keep an appointment. Suppose instead of stating this simple fact I were to say: "I assure you, and there is no question about it; in fact, I dare you to doubt it, that I walked through a field to meet you. No, I did not take my car. I will swear an oath that I did not, if you do not believe me." Naturally you would be quite certain that I had done nothing of the sort. You would feel that I was concealing something else I had done. I might even feel so myself. It is a simple psychological observation that if someone says about something that it is so without doubt, why then, he doubts it.

C. G. Jung, in his recent book, *Answer to Job*, deals with this sort of thing in the same way. He psychoanalyzes the personality of



Jehovah, and concludes that Jehovah, who has been boasting of His power to Job, who, having suffered by that power, had no reason to doubt its existence, has to boast of His power precisely because He does doubt it. We must remember that we are dealing not with Jehovah Himself, but with the chronicler's concept of Him. Thus we can here observe how the later development of the Old Testament, which leads to the Incarnation in the New Testament, is based upon the chronicler's exposition of Jehovah's self-doubt, for Jehovah, for some strange reason, always keeps His omniscience in His pocket and does not make the use of it that we might expect of Him.

However this may be, it is wise always to be very doubtful when you hear somebody reaffirm a point too strongly, an attitude that applies as well to love and to the affections as to the problems of theology. For belief of any kind is ineffable. Love, for example, is a form of belief, and we all know that whenever we say, "I love you," a little of the original feeling behind our statement dwindles away into the verbal world where the nonverbal has no place. It is for this reason, among others, that in some cultures certain words are tabu, not only because they are in themselves dangerous, but because to mention them would be to diminish their power. The essence of a mystery is that it should remain a mystery.

My grandfather was a minister in Holstein, in North Germany. One day the local Archduke came to visit the little town, and my grandfather had to receive him in solemn procession. As he guided the Archduke through the street towards the church, the Duke said: "By the way, usually when I visit a town such as yours the bells have been set ringing on my entry. Why are your bells not ringing?"

My grandfather said, "Your Highness, there are a hundred reasons. In the first place, we don't have any bells."

"Then you need not tell me the other 99 reasons," said the Duke and smiled.

Thus the theologians of the Middle Ages felt it necessary to boast of their complete proof for the existence of God, when one essential condition would have done as well. Confronted with such an anxious battery of theological power, Immanuel Kant, like the Archduke, stripped the matter clean. "If they had given me only one proof that would have truly convinced me, I would gladly have done without the 99 above and beyond them," he said.

He was right. The very fact that there are so many different proofs for the existence of God is proof without doubt of the doubt of the validity of God that lay in the minds of those who manufactured such proofs. Yet it is not so much these specious proofs one is apt to attack, as the whole notion that something should demand proof that, by its nature, is in an area of the spirit where neither proof nor disproof is pertinent.

One of the greatest American theologians, Paul Tillich of Harvard Divinity School, stated in one of his recent publications that to attempt to prove the existence of God is exactly as blasphemous as the atheist's attempt to disprove His existence. Why should Paul Tillich say this? Because the divine, which is the source of all existence, cannot be said to have either existence or non-existence, because the light of which you and I and all existing things are but the shadows does not appear as such in the shadow world itself, and therefore does not have a representative symbol in this shadow world with which it could be stated. Nor is any shadow world, since it consists only of shadows, able to disprove or prove the existence of the light from which it derives its existence.

In other words, beyond faith and beyond reason there is a third principle that is more important than either. This principle we shall for the moment call the brahman, a Sanskrit word. We shall employ such terms from an exotic culture, for the key words of our own spiritual heritage have become clouded in meaning and unintelligible from having too many definitions, or secondary connotations. Therefore, in our search for certainty, we are apt to seek a terminology not so beclouded for us. Therefore many westerners go outside their own tradition and turn to Vedanta philosophy, to occultism, theosophy, and to a number of cults of a similar stamp, all of which have invaded the West from the Orient.

We may ask ourselves why this search for another tradition exists. C. G. Jung, in his brief autobiography, tells us that as a boy he became furious at people who behaved stupidly or viciously, until suddenly one day he decided that he would enjoy himself more if, instead of losing his temper with such people, he studied the reasons for their behavior. In short, to understand them it was necessary for him to shift his point of approach to them. In the same way, those who turn to the Orient for their religious insight may be doing so only because that is the only way in which they can gain an

insight into the actual spiritual content of the western tradition that is native to them, but whose inner message is no longer clear.

For this reason this book will use such terms as *brahman*; for if we discuss theological matters in terms native to the western world, such as "God the Creator," or "Jesus Christ," we immediately close up our minds by limiting ourselves to the special concepts of our own faith; whereas our intention was to discuss the nature of belief and of God in their universal aspects. But if we commence in a roundabout way, by teaching or considering the idea of *brahman* that stands behind all appearance; if we develop an understanding of the *atman*, or Inner Self that is an eternal witness to ourselves; then we begin to open doors of the mind, rather than to close them. Thus, also, we may perceive that the ideas of the *brahman* and the *atman* are concepts also found, if in slightly different guise, in our own spiritual heritage. For though faith may be ineffable, it has, all the same, a methodology intrinsic and unalterable, common to all men.

To open the doors of the spirit we require a key. So it may be, for many people today, that we can open up the rooms of our Christian heritage, the keys to which we have allowed to rust, only with the symbolic keys of some other room. In matters of life and feeling it is usually easier to go a roundabout way to come to your destination, for there are apt to be many obstacles to a direct approach.

Therefore let us introduce the Sanskrit word *darsana*, a word meaning "realization," as a better way to understand what was originally meant by faith and reason, but is no longer conveyed by, those terms insofar as both faith and reason now imply doubt, although in former times they did not, and although *darsana* does not.

Indian philosophers compare the realization, or *darsana* that Man has of the Being of Being, that is, of the Mystery of Being, with direct sensory experience in the following way. They say that we need to employ inference and logic to arrive at a certain conclusion about something that cannot be proven by means of the five senses. To reach their conclusion, Indian philosophers were quite capable of employing syllogistic and logical principles, long before Aristotle formulated them for the Greeks.

For instance, if we see smoke on the mountain, we need a logical

process to infer that there is a fire and that something ought to be done about it. We say, "there is smoke on the mountain." Syllogistically we then say that, on the basis of much experience, generally speaking, wherever there is smoke there is fire, and conclude therefore that there is fire on the mountain. Such is reasoning, either in the East or the West.

But in addition, the Indian philosopher would add that if we light a fire next our feet, and see the flame, and feel the heat, then we do not have to prove syllogistically that the fire is there, because we can see and feel it.

The term *darsana*, which is translated by "realization," but whose overtones in Sanskrit are more profound than that, would apply to the fire at the feet. It assumes that that which has self-evident being needs no rationale, insofar as it is perceived, which is proof enough. Nor is what is felt to be considered to exist as an arbitrary assumption of being, essential to an argument, yet insusceptible of proof. On the contrary, like the fire at the feet, as opposed to the smoke on the mountain, it is realized to be there because it is there, and not because its existence is necessary to the existence of something else, or because previous observation, or even future observation, makes its existence probable. No argument is necessary.

So it is with the Being of Being, that incredible realization that we are, here, now, at this moment. You may question everything in the world, inside and outside of yourself. Any phenomenon is questionable because it has identity and therefore an existence in relation to other phenomena. It can be compared. But the Being of Being has no such comparative identity. It simply *is*. It has neither time nor place. It cannot be weighed, limited, doubted, abolished, extended, or altered, because being beyond time and place, it neither was nor will be. In having no limited identity, it is without the scope of such instruments as we employ to define the phenomenal world.

Such is the miracle of the Being of Being, and we cannot arrive at it by reasoning; we do not need to believe in it, because then we would doubt it, and if we doubt it, then we do not perceive it. And if we do not perceive it, then we cannot discuss it. Yet we *are* discussing it, therefore, at least within the limits of this discussion, and for some, on a more permanent footing, it *is*. And

since it is, then it is being realized by us at least as firmly, thoroughly, and clearly as we realize the touch of our hands and the colors that are in our field of vision.

This preliminary completed, we now come to the various proofs of the existence of God. Since theologians put great store by such proofs, it would be wise for us to examine them. These proofs are divided into two categories, the cosmological and the ontological.

The cosmological proofs for the existence of God derive, by inference, the existence of God from the fact that there is a world, that anything as existent as the world must have a cause, and that this cause is, so says St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*, what people generally called Deus, or God.

St. Thomas Aquinas is wrong in this last statement of his proof, however. For as we go through the history of religions we will see that the cause of the existence of this world, far from being universally proclaimed to have been God, has often been deemed a Demon or some worse giant, a creature neither to love, to worship, nor to welcome.

The ontological proof of the existence of God, as opposed to the cosmological, derives His existence from the fact that the idea of God exists in Man's mind. Cicero was the first to formulate this ontological proof. Cicero said that in all the world of his time, and the Roman Empire knew a great deal about the world, there had never been found a people who did not have belief in a Deity. Therefore, he concluded, such a deity must exist. To us this seems a somewhat shaky argument, for we know, and strongly suspect that Cicero also knew, that the consensus gentium, or agreement of all people, may be based on ignorance, supersitition, or an absence of advanced scientific explanation. Many superstitions are universal to mankind, but that does not make them other than superstitions. Though such ontological explanations have been much refined since the days of Cicero, they have always suffered from the same error that he made. These explanations were codified by Anselm of Canterbury in his *Proslogium*. Anselm formulates the ontological argument with as much polish as it has ever achieved.

In effect he says that he has in his mind the idea of a most perfect being that has all the perfections he can imagine. It is most good, most powerful, and most knowing. Among the perfect qualities that this being has in his mind is the quality of existence, which



it also possesses in the perfect degree. For if the being did not have the quality of existence, then it would not have all the perfections imaginable, which was the essential premise originally conceived. Indeed, this being, and such was the axiom of the proof, must have among other qualities the quality of existence; since it has them all, therefore God exists.

Now when we hear a piece of casuistry as refined as this, we feel somehow tricked by it. Intellectually the logic must convince, but personally it does not. Such was the impression Immanuel Kant had when he read Anselm's proof and began to analyze it. He concluded that the proof was invalid: for being, or existence, is not a quality among other qualities, but a condition that stands on another page altogether. Otherwise, Kant observed, he could imagine very well 300 thalers in his pocket, though that he did imagine them there did not make them exist there. Perhaps, on the other hand, this was not a valid disproof, for 300 thalers, desirable though they might be, yet lack the qualities of highest perfection as those are philosophically considered, and are as much on another page as was existence for Kant.

Kant also overlooks the commencement of the proof, the statement that there can be one being and one only that has all perfections, an indestructible statement, since anything that had all the perfections excludes all rivals, who must fall by the way for want of the already claimed qualifications.

The flaw of ontological proof is that it confuses the images in our minds with the objective proof of the existence in the phenomenal world of such images, an error that much distresses psychologists who consider the problem of religion. There are many of these. Modern psychologists, and in particular Jungians, are much interested in religion, as well as the specific history of all religions, for they realize that the divinities worshipped by Man are the most interesting of the external projections of the ideals held by Man. Thus they write huge books about this or that divinity, going into elaborate detail, not because they believe in the divinity discussed, but because the study of that divinity gives much information about the workings of the human mind.

But if you say to a modern psychologist from any of the contemporary schools that you are interested in God not only as an idea in your mind, but as a reality existing beyond the confines of

the known, he will smilingly answer that what is objective reality to your mind is only what you subjectively call objectivity, and that therefore such a reality does not exist as such. It is a frequently repeated argument to be found in the introductions to current psychological books on religious subjects.

This twisting around of language when we are not quite sure whether we are talking about an actuality or about that actuality as a figment of Man's thought is all too prevalent today. Many psychologists explicitly state that it is meaningless to assume that we can have any perception whatsoever about anything that is beyond our consciousness. On the other hand, theologians insist throughout the ages that in discussing their subject they are discussing something more real than we are, not only in the imagination, but also in the body and the mind as well. The two views present us with a grave problem.

It is a problem that psychologists believe themselves able to solve easily; but they seldom get to the core of it; and here lies the point at which our manner of investigation has to part company with that of the average psychologist.

For in this discussion we are not interested in religious ideas as merely a psychological phenomenon. Indeed we would not do justice to the subject, were we not primarily interested in the object of those ideas rather than in their form. The object of those ideas is the consideration of what has usually been termed the Divine, or, let us say, the Being of Being. We cannot be really interested unless we consider brahman itself not as an idea, but as a reality.

Such a consideration is in itself a religious matter. For you will find that the great religions at the period when each was most alive were not much concerned with religion as a process. They were concerned only with the goal of religion, which is belief free from doubt. For this reason the great prophet does not claim that he is a religious man. He is too busy attempting to state his belief to have the time to bother about his own sanctity.

We must realize how important to Man is his religious consciousness. Today we are apt to forget that it is of any importance whatsoever. Goethe's drama *Faust* begins with a Heavenly prologue in which God and the Devil discuss the to them small and insignificant image of the Deity that is the greatest that man can envision when worshipping Him. Both the Lord and the Devil agree that this God

as imagined by Man is a pitiable creature when compared with the actuality of God. Goethe does not make the error of confusing the image of God as Man conceives it with the reality of Godhead itself.

In religious terms, we know that we are in God's hands. Whether we like it or not, want it or not, or are aware of it or not, makes no difference to our so being. Therefore the great prophets have been relatively little concerned with the mechanics of religion. They were concerned, to the exclusion of all else, with God.

Whether you are an atheist, a sceptic, an agnostic, or an orthodox believer, you are still in the hands of God. Maybe it is happier to be in one of these categories than in another, but even so we are never free of this ultimate source of Being without which life and existence would vanish instantly.

Or, let us say that reason, which is the foundation of these various cosmological and ontological proofs of the existence of God, has little to do with our lives as we actually live them. Reason is but one function of the mind, a small part that we ingeniously apply to the outward reality of our day, but one severely limited in its scope and one that in turn severely limits the true scope of ourselves. How much ratiocination, for example, does the average man indulge in during the course of an average day? And how much of that day is devoted to other activities of his mind?

Suppose we were to suggest that we ratiocinate, or think, for five minutes, and then, at the end of that time, ask, "Have we really thought, or have our thoughts thought *us*?" For it is true, our thoughts think us. They come from other areas than the reasonable part of the mind with which we pretend to control them. They are beyond reason. They think us; and streams of thought flow through us. Of, if this process is unpleasant to us, perhaps we have wiped ourselves out by counting, let us say, from one to two thousand.

In short, we must ask ourselves if, during that imaginary five minutes, we can think; if we do think very much; or, for that matter, if we ever think in a truly ratiocinative way. Few of us do. It is a discipline that comes late in Man's mental development, and that is more at the mercy of the non-rational mind than in control of it.

The greatest contemporary Indian philosopher, Sri Aurobindo, in answer to a letter from a devotee who asked him if he thought in



this way or in that, answered simply that what the writer called thinking he never did. Either he saw or he did not see, and that was all.

It is a sound answer. No doubt Sri Aurobindo does think in that way. Not only is it probably the way in which the great philosopher contemplates existence, but also it is the way in which, if we probe deeply enough into ourselves, we will find that we feel, also. Bertrand Russell recently stated that thinking as such was so recent and novel an achievement of Man, that even now we could not do more than seven minutes a day of it.

On the other hand, if our grasp upon ratiocination is infirm, there is *darsana*, or realization, the perception of some kind of reality, a direct and potent insight into the Being of Being. This insight, which antedates, runs concurrently with, and will probably postdate ratiocinative discipline, is something that is beyond reason. By reasoning Man cannot achieve it. Nor should he try to do so, for if he does, he will fail. It either is or it is not. But if it is, it opens a window on our inner world.

We might conclude that proofs for the existence of God are irrelevant insofar as they seek to prove that God exists, and thereby deal with the problem of His existence in a temporal way, in relation to temporal concepts of being. God, being supraexistent, is the cause of existence. He stands behind it, in a realm beyond both existence and non-existence, for He exists in a sense in which we do not define existence and non-existence. The source of something cannot be found within that something, but has its own existence elsewhere. Both the manner of that existence and the nature of that otherwhere we cannot define, for they are totally outside our ability to make comparisons. Therefore such proofs, in being inapplicable, are invalid. They are also, as Paul Tillich has stated, impious, for they would pull the Divine down to a level that is below it. They would make the source of being, or the Being of Being, merely a being like other beings. Also such proofs are illogical. A cause cannot be its own effect and a universal cannot be a particular of itself.

The great Medieval theologians realized this contradiction, not to say blasphemy, and sought to establish the value of their proofs of the existence of God by saying that they were only *ad fidei nostrae confirmationem*, that is, that they were for the confirmation

of a Faith that existed anyway. This qualification reduces such proofs to little more than a compulsive restatement of what one believes already. It also severely limits the effectiveness of such proofs, for if they can convince only a believer, then they are of no use in convincing an unbeliever. Such proofs are made to appear little more than spiritual exercises for the elevation of those believers who have temporarily forgotten their state of belief.

In other words, let us assume that you and I, although by no means atheists, perhaps because we are *not* atheists, have from time to time been touched by the Miracle of Existence when we read these proofs, whether they were cosmological or ontological. Let us say that on a dreary morning, when we woke without so much as a spark of inspiration or any contact with the Miracle of Being, we found these proofs on our night table and that they reawakened in our minds something that we had always known, but had forgotten for the moment. In such a case these proofs would have been, as are many religious symbols and images, spiritual alarm clocks to wake us once more to the Miracle of Being. Such is their real value. They evoke the state of awareness that the Indians call *darsana*, a very specific and special type of awareness. It is as though we woke twice, and it makes life very different for us.

What is it that these proofs are seeking to establish, but that they cannot? In other words, what is the true subject of our religious thoughts? Comparative religion, as a study, can deal with the outward forms of religion, with a classification of faiths into the Monotheistic, or the Polytheistic, and with the evolutionary process as it operates in the history of faiths. However it is the purpose of this book to deal with religious thoughts, and with what might be called The Thought that motivates the machinery of most of the higher faiths. This is a more difficult matter. We need not go so far as to agree with a minister recently quoted in an editorial in *Life Magazine*, who said "God hates religion." In one view, it is doubtful if God hates or loves anything in the way that we do. However, God hates religion, said the minister, because it is not religion that is our ultimate concern; and whenever, as in our present Christian world, religion becomes the main concern of organized religion, then the original prophetic inspiration that a religion is designed to enshrine flies out the window. In addition, it might be said that though many faiths have advocated, for various reasons, the per-

formance of good works, social case work, which is the chief activity of many a contemporary faith, is by no means to be confused with the attainment of spiritual insight, or even with the abolition of the ego that, almost all faiths agree, is one of the prime conditions for the attainment of that insight.

We have said that attempts to prove the existence of God amount to blasphemy. We may also add, if we examine the titles of sermons listed in front of churches or in the daily papers, that there is a great deal of blasphemy in our churches as well. Such questions or titles as "Can Christianity still hold sway in the Atomic Age?"; "What can religion give me today?"; "Religion, the only refuge of the soul"; "Religion as a valid power for world peace," or even the somewhat defensive "The family that prays together stays together" (what else, logically, could they do?), display very little but an essential doubt bolstered by rhetorical fervor. Something that for the time seems more important than religion is being used to bolster up religion, as in a recent cartoon that showed Christ the Redeemer walking on top of an atomic cloud, with no ironic intent. You cannot make eternal verities topical. They are beyond the topical. If religion feels it necessary to make itself topical, then we are left with the suspicion that religion is a back number frantically endeavoring to make itself appear up to date. Whatever else this attitude may display, it does not testify to an unshatterable belief. Such an attitude makes religion an object of utility, placing it on a level with the paring knife, the bomb shelter, and a spiritual Band-Aid, a mere matter of coping with the present as well as possible. It certainly has nothing to do with *darsana*, the realization of the Miracle of Being.

In this sense, anyone who wants to investigate religion without becoming blasphemous must investigate not the lesser and specific miracles of any faith, but the one Miracle that embraces them all. In other words, we are trying to approach a definite object that has been called by many names throughout all religions; and we are trying to approach it by giving it the most neutral, abstract, and therefore most general name that we can.

Rudolf Otto of Marburg, my highly venerated teacher, deals with this neutral thing in his well-known book, *The Idea of the Holy*. There, in concentrated form, he gives the theory that is still known and studied by all contemporary theologians, the theory of

the numinosum, a Latin word for an undefinable, awe-inspiring "It" that, in containing all reality, also stands beyond all reality. This "It," which lies beyond all things, is not capable of being grasped by our senses. When the numinous comes to our attention, it is presented in one or both of two different ways. These Rudolf Otto has termed the tremendum and the fascinosum. The tremendum is that aspect of the numinous that terrifies us. This aspect occurs in the dicta of all prophets. It is the mighty and fear-inspiring God of Isaiah. Such prophets describe the terrifying, the puzzling, the bewildering, astonishing, and frightening character of the Divine. Man, frightened out of his everyday order and away from his cherished surroundings by the sudden impact on his consciousness of a realization of the Absolute, feels his emotional reaction to be one aspect of the numinous itself. But this is only one aspect of the numinosum. There is that other view of it that Otto calls the fascinosum.

This is the aspect of the Absolute that fascinates us. The power that terrifies us out of our everyday consciousness, at the same time that it frightens us, also has the power to attract us. It is something that we do not want to lose sight of, and to which we are drawn back again and again. We are thus in the position of a child watching a television set. It sees a story it does not understand, which frightens it precisely because it does not understand it, a story about something larger than itself, and yet at the same time a story in which the child is completely absorbed. It may prefer to peep out from behind a chair at it, but still, it must see it. It could not bear not to see it, or to have it turned off.

Once we have glimpsed the numinous we can never quite let go of it. We cannot comfortably forget it, even though our perception of it may fade or be diverted. We have, despite our fear, a tremendous curiosity about it that nothing will ever satisfy. We challenge ourselves and those who do not perceive it by asking what it is about. Today, all around us in the world, there is an enormous curiosity about religion and the nature of the divine.

This curiosity has been brought home to me time and again, while I was riding back and forth across the country on trains. One has much time to talk and to get acquainted with people. It is a convention among us that people will mention on trains things they would tell neither their wives nor their doctors. A train is the port-

able confessional of American life. It is also what Hyde Park Corner is to the English; sometimes tiresome, but usually useful. In talking to people on trains, I have found them enormously curious on discovering that I am interested in Indian philosophy or the question of religion as a whole. An astounding number of people are interested in religion whom you would not expect to be concerned with such things. And since they talk more freely of their preoccupations on trains than elsewhere, perhaps this interest is a genuine one, usually pushed to the back of their minds, yet always there. They are attracted to the subject. There is something in it that will not let them alone. I suggest that this something is the *fascinosa* aspect of the numinous.

As for the *tremendum*, that is a matter of awe. It is not really a matter of fright or fear, for we all know the object of our fears. We may not admit the object, but somewhere inside we know what it is. But awe is that special uneasy emotion that is evoked by something we do not know the nature of. It is somehow undefinable. And this quality of being undefinable is what strikes us about the numinosum, whenever we perceive it.

Theologians, whose profession it is to formulate definitions of Man's response to the ultimate, have based the two chief types of theology upon the two aspects of the numinosum. These are positive and negative theology.

Negative theology is a response to the *tremendum*. The awe-inspiring effect of the *tremendum* is so strong that those who experience it find it possible to define the nature of God only by saying that it has no human resemblance and therefore cannot be described. We can only contemplate it in silence, for no human words can deal with it. Not even our terror at experiencing the numinosum can give us a true picture of the awe we feel, let alone a picture of that which evokes it. So the negative theologian, whose attitude has been evident in Christian theology from the beginning and in all other religions as well, says one cannot speak of God except by denying His presence anywhere in the visible world. This same attitude gave rise to the doctrines of transcendentalism.

To go back to our image of the alarm clock, when suddenly we are shocked awake to the *tremendum*, the intensity of the awe we experience in turn shocks us so much that it seems to wipe away what significance we had formerly attached to the world about us.



In a flash of vision, we grasp something that seems so much more important than anything else we know that we are pitched into a reality that transcends the reality we know and that, in the moment of our perception, abolishes the lesser reality that formerly we knew. It seems so meaningless to attach any importance to the world we know, after we have had an insight into the higher reality beyond it, that we believe that the only true reality is this higher reality.

Such transcendentalism, which dismisses the significance of the world around us as trivial by comparison with the importance of the greater reality of the Deity, when coupled with the experience that springs from the negative response evoked by the tremendum, gives rise to a dualism implicit in all prophetic vision, a division of the world we know into that which is true and valuable because of the glimpse it affords us of a higher reality, and on the other hand, *maya*, the notion that existence as we know it is only a dream, that the apparent world is a crumbling and uncertain pseudo-reality only. This concept, which is modified by later religious development, is nevertheless one of the things that inform any new faith with much of its initial fervor. It is based upon the terrific aspect of the numinosum.

In the history of Christianity we find this transcendentalism fully developed at a very early date, in the system of the philosopher Plotinus, an Egyptian whose dates are roughly 205 to 270 A.D. Plotinus was not a Christian, but Christian theologians became highly dependent upon his formulations. In substance Plotinus said that he would not dare to give any name to that which lay behind the All but was yet nameless. He would not care to call it good, nor to think it bad, because the term "good" was far too limited to describe the source of all things and of all the differences among things. This argument he carried even further, claiming that he would not even call this thing Being, not that he believed that It was not Being, but because that which we know as being was merely derived from It, and therefore had essentially an entirely different type of reality than It had.

Therefore Plotinus wished to call It non-being, instead of being, because, such is the nature of dualism, there was a germ of truth in saying it did not have being, insofar as it could not be defined in terms of our definitions of temporal being, so that to say It had being in that sense would be false.

Later Christian mystics, such as Meister Eckhart, echoed the same paradox. Meister Eckhart said that though God has many names, he did not want God there where He has names, but where He has no names, because He is beyond all names.

Such statements, paradoxes that seek to establish the nature of the absolute by denying it all temporary and temporal qualities, both positive and negative, are somewhat bewildering. It is as difficult to envision this Higher Reality as it is to envision a new color outside the range of the spectrum. You may say that such a color is not red, or yellow, or blue, but you are incapable of saying what it is. You can imagine, dimly, the existence of something of this sort, but you can in no way imagine its identity or characteristics. But you will find that, in order to establish such an entity, you first have to deny that it has any of the properties of the colors you are capable of knowing, with which it has nothing in common. In this way you reproduce to some extent the effect that an experience of the tremendous quality of the numinosum has, in rendering negative the world around you.

In opposition to negative theology stands positive theology, deriving from the experience of the fascinatum, the pleasurable reaction associated with having our eyes opened to the Ultimate.

The verb to fascinate comes from the Latin word for a spell or incantation. It is this spell that makes us sing hymns and psalms. With such an attitude, theological proofs for the existence of God are to be viewed, as Medieval scholasticists regarded them, as expressions of adoration on the part of true believers. Positive theologians, and most contemporary theologians are such, speak of the awe-inspiring quality of the Being of Being beyond all existence in terms of being. They confess that their terms are not fully adequate, but point out that if we cannot express ourselves in terms of such language as we have, then we cannot express ourselves at all. Therefore we should speak of God by means of such terms as Being, always remembering that in so doing we use language symbolically, insofar as we are making use of its concepts and terms to express something that they do not define, but merely parallel. All too often such theologians forget that their terms are symbolic, and herein lies the great pitfall of positive theology. Eventually, from use, they confound the verbal symbol with the nonverbal and nonconceptual

reality that it expresses, and so lose sight of the Being of Being altogether.

Therefore we must always approach the statements of positive theologians with caution, remembering that those who make them often forget that their statements are not definitions, but at most merely parables.

The confusion is a double one. For example, in lyric poetry we take it for granted that the actual factual content of the poem has nothing to do with its real content. "Go, lovely rose," for instance, is about neither roses nor going. "They flee from me, who sometime did me seek," is more complicated, for it is both about its ostensible subject matter (the fall of an amorous courtier), and also about a far different emotional condition. Symbols, metaphors, and similes are not always primary, but may sometimes be secondary, tertiary, and even more removed than that, expressing meaning on many levels, though all concerned with the same *kind* of experience or reality. Thus the owl, to the western mind, personifies wisdom and the night side; to the ancient Chinese, it presaged death, and by extension, immortality. But if we examine these seemingly opposed ideas, we will soon see that they are all in the same general stream of thought.

But the dangers of symbolism are great, and we are so accustomed to believe what we read in prose, or even what we think in prose, to be a literal statement of fact, that we must remind ourselves to be wary. Even if we know that it is not, and did not design it to be so, yet we tend to believe that it is. "How can I know what I think, till I see what I say," said a character in one of E. M. Forster's books, but for us the problem is almost the reverse. As soon as we say, for example, that the Divine is a source, we are caught in our own unconscious symbolism. The word "source" has so many connotations, that any metaphor employing it automatically clouds the thing we are trying to express with the multitudinous nature of the means of expression. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is probably the most abstract poem in the English language, betraying an almost total absence of specific adjectives and visual images. Yet how many of us, reading of Satan's fall, remember that it was not Satan as a person, that he was not literally falling, and that the abyss through which he fell was not really an abyss? Even Milton



did not remember that, and was carried away by his own symbols.

Probably the most radical work of positive theology that can be found is the Jewish mystical work, the *Kabbala*, and of that work, the book called *Sohar*.

In the book of *Sohar* are to be found amazingly detailed descriptions of God. There we see Him personified as an old man sitting on a cloud of certain density, with a wrinkled face and a very long white beard. The picture is accompanied by a gloss, in which we find that every wrinkle is symbolic and means something other than what we might, in a temporal sense, imagine wrinkles to mean. For instance, God is sitting on a cloud to show that he is higher up and beyond us. He is very old, not in the sense that he is impotent or senile, but to suggest that he is beyond birth and death. He is wrinkled, for the world was not a paradise even in the eyes of God. It had its cares. He has a long beard. The explanation of the beard, an inessential part of him, like the tail of the Buddhist ox, is that though He is to be discovered behind all things, one can at most touch one hair of this inessential part, and no more. The description continues. We learn of the symbolism of the color of his eyes, his eyebrows, and so forth. The image may seem to us naïve and it may make us smile, but if we smile, then we have not taken it literally, and so may still perceive, beneath this meticulous detail, some of its symbolic meaning uncluttered by connotations. The ratiocinative function of the human mind is so recent and so little trained, that it must have something upon which to focus its attention, in order to think abstractly. But it is also so little trained that it may take the focal point for the thing seen, and herein is the great danger.

Again, let us consider the Three Graces, which Christian theology often mentions when it discusses the Divine. This triad predates Christianity. But even when we see them drawn out for us in some 17th century engraving, three plump Germanic ladies standing about heavily awaiting the Judgment of Paris, we must remember that they are not really three nubile ladies. They are symbolic of the three graces God has extended us: the Grace of Being, insofar as He created us; the Grace of Revelation, insofar as He sometimes allows us to perceive Him; and the Grace of Redemption or atonement, whereby though we have lost our glimpse of the Miracle and fallen back into everyday life, we still can perceive Him once again,

and so are not eternally damned for having forgotten the Mystery of His Being, but are allowed to continue in our unawakened existence, so that we may once more awake.

A triad of this sort exists in many religions. To it the Indian faiths would add a fourth member, and the Catholic Church has recently done the same, by elevating the Virgin Mary. To the Indian this fourth consists of God shielding the light of His eyes and veiling Himself so that the immensity and radiance of His presence will not blind us, or consume our separate existences. The Indians are a practical people in such matters. Many of our Christian mystics have mortified themselves through the intensity of their perception, taking the soul and letting the body go. To the Indian this is not altogether pious.

Let us come back for a moment to the positive theological dogma of creation, which is that the world and everything in it, including ourselves, has been created by a power that is creative and that is greater than ourselves. Thus we find ourselves in a world already created, and it is manifest to us that we have not created ourselves. Positive theology expresses this miraculous fact by using the symbol of manufacture. It would say that God made this world. But we must remember to smile, and so to perceive that no such manufacture, in our sense of that term, took place, and that the theologian does not believe that it did. Such making exists only in the sense that we feel that everything that is had an origin, the nature of which we cannot know, and involved a process of some sort.

Alas, all too many theologians have been taken in by their own symbols and have regarded the Book of Genesis as a scientific treatise rather than a spiritual parable. Even so stripped a phrase as the Miracle of Being, or the Being of Being, is also not a concept, but only a symbolic referent.

Creation, revelation, and redemption, and indeed all other religious doctrines, are symbolic. As soon as we lose sight of this fact the symbols themselves become falsehoods, and thus dangerous, because they petrify something that ought to have been kept alive, and in cramming the larger into the lesser vehicle, lose much and distort more.

Therefore the study of Comparative Religion, which we are about to consider, ought to be thought of as useful, not only to the degree that it will teach us something of foreign religions, but also to the

extent that it may help to revivify religious symbols. Thus it can be physician to an ailing religion; and today all the religions of the world have stultified, just as all people today have about them a touch of neurosis. Religions are sick, and the scholar of comparative religion, as a physician with a full casebook, can diagnose the sickness. He will find that it consists of a universal confusion of what is essential with what is inessential in any creed. The essential is a realization of the Ultimate behind all being; and this has become confused with the all too anthropocentric formulations of this Being upon which all faiths have come to rely.

All religious statements are symbolic, without exception. This symbolism, together with the dualism that springs from the experience of the tremendum, are two things that are to be found in all religions. We have dealt with dualism, the reaction to the shock of the tremendum that splits the world into what is truly so and what is derived from the truly so, but whose reality is thereby made questionable.

That all religions are symbolic means that all religions are essentially capable of being misunderstood. Yet unless they contain this ambiguity of statement, religious truths are not really religious statements, for if they deal with the explicit they deal with matters of procedure, worship, and ritual, rather than with the purpose, cause, or guiding spirit of such ritual. Thus most religions, as organized religions, are in that guise concerned with peripheral matters of worship, rather than with the thing worshipped itself. A statement of fact is a statement of fact. But a religious statement is not a statement of fact. It is a symbolic and referential statement. The word symbol derives from a Greek ballistic term, so that to make a symbolic statement is to throw something from one side to another side. It is never to catch it. At most a religious symbol can show us the probable trajectory of a thought, and is thus the only way that we can project our thoughts beyond the wall of the knowable that shuts us off from the unknowable. So the word implies two things, the thing at which we are aiming, and the thing with which we aim.

In itself a symbol has no significance, for unless we can say what it signifies, which we never can, then it is not in itself of meaning. It is only a means. So we may say that all religious statements are

in themselves meaningless, but are a means of achieving some concept of the meaningful. One cannot say more than that.

For example, if we say God is Light, we mean neither that He is Light nor that He is, for that matter, we do not quite know what we mean by God. It is impossible to understand this statement. Therefore it is equally impossible to misunderstand it, since there is nothing to which we can compare it, and thus check it. But all the same, within a specific frame of reference, we *can* misunderstand it, by taking it literally. Over the altar of a church in Menton, France, there is a large lunette of the Virgin Mary as the Light of the World. In her hand she holds a large old-fashioned Edison electric light bulb, which actually lights up when the priest pulls a switch. The thing is enormous and the glowing filament is at least a foot and a half long. This is exactly the kind of misunderstanding we are discussing here. It is absurd, for it reduces a metaphor to an allegory, and the allegory to the status of a household appliance. Whenever we take a religious statement literally, that is exactly what we accomplish.

If you are in a state of *tremendum* or *fascinatum*, then you will perceive the meaning, or at any rate some meaning, behind these illogical and seemingly meaningless statements. But the chances are that you are not in either one of these states; indeed, if you were you would not be examining religious statements at all, you would be making them; therefore it is essential for you to remember to examine all religious dicta, even those in this book, not for their grammatical or connotative meaning, but for what lies behind them.

In short you must become conversant with the paradox. The paradox is a theological device. Realizing that it is impossible to talk plainly about the Being of Being, theologians deliberately offend all rules of logic and tantalize the intellect with oxymorons, in order to bring about a conversion in our minds, that is, to force the mind open to the Being of Being by smashing the shell of orderly thought that holds us down to mundane affairs. There seems to be no other way.

When the Zen Buddhist priest of Japan awakens to the nature of the numinosum he snaps his fingers. He does nothing else. Either one understands the gesture or one does not. If asked to explain the

meaning of existence or the dogma of the Buddha, he will quite likely resort to violence. He may quite possibly throw the questioner out the window. He believes in administering a shock. A verbal shock, however, is not only more decorous, but less injurious, and that is what we shall try to use here.

The Christian theologian Tertullian (floruit 160-230 A.D.) administered such a shock when he said something that has been reported as *credo quia absurdum*: I believe because it is absurd.

The statement is much misunderstood, for it is a religious and symbolic statement. By absurd Tertullian did not mean that which was ridiculous, but that which was illogical, could not be made to fit into any frame of reference established by the human mind. "It," the goal of belief, was beyond all frames of reference, and precisely because it was beyond them, it was therefore believable. This is a typical theological and symbolic paradox. There are many others. One of the oldest and most famous is Plato's description of Man's situation in relation to the Ultimate in the Allegory of the Cave that occurs in the seventh book of *The Republic*:

And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened:—Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

In back:

... men pass along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall. Some of them are talking and others silent.<sup>1</sup>

This show is continuous, and few of the chained men feel any desire either to leave or to see what it is that casts the shadows on the screen. Since they cannot move anyway, it is perhaps just as well that they lack curiosity. The show is continuous during both night and day, and as far as the prisoners are concerned, it has always

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Vol. II, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 376.

been going on. Eventually, however, one man, whom Plato, being a philosopher, calls a philosopher, managed to get free of his shackles and turned around.

He then discovered that there was a fire behind the people in the cave, and that in front of this fire various figures on sticks were being carried up and down, casting the shadows that the prisoners were content to watch, this being the only reality they knew. Curiosity impelled the philosopher to leave the cave, and once outside he saw the sun shining, and realized that the fire in the cave was only the smallest reflection of the fire of the sun, even though the fire in the cave was the source of everything that the men in the cave could perceive, all they could perceive being but shadows.

The philosopher felt called upon to liberate those in the cave from their shackles, and to make them perceive that what they took to be reality was only a shadow cast by a light that was itself but the shadow of a greater light. He felt pity for the prisoners' state of unawareness. He became what, in the history of religion, we call a returner, one who after seeing the great light does not remain content with his own revelation, but goes back to bring this insight to others. The philosopher went back to the cave and talked to the prisoners shackled there. He told them that what they took for reality was only shadow, cast by a light they could never see. He told them that what they saw was only the negative of a positive reality, and as such did not really exist. He expected to be believed. Instead, not having seen the light, and taking the only reality they knew to be the only reality there was, the prisoners thought him insane. They thought he did not know what he was talking about.

Plato's allegory remains one of the best examples we have of the difference between what we feel to be real and what is real, between the part of our knowledge that is ignorance, and the part of our ignorance that becomes apparent as ignorance once we have seen the truth. It is also an excellent allegory of the nature of the reality that stands beyond our world of appearance.

Of course we can ask ourselves if Plato's philosopher could have convinced his shackled audience by making them a reproduction of what he had seen. But he could at most have made a model of the lesser light behind them, not of the greater light that he symbolized by the sun. That is why the existence of the Being of Being, the always greater light beyond any light we can perceive, and one



far, far beyond the shadow world in which we have our being, can neither be proven nor disproven. If we try, we cut the light of a sun down to the light of a fire, the Ultimate light down to the light of the sun. At any rate, we diminish the nature of the Ultimate, and that is blasphemy.

But if this transcendent reality of God is not in the shadows, the fire, the sun, not in the realm of anything we can identify, then where is God? This question has given rise to what today we call Gap Theology, which means that theologians have attempted to locate the Miracle of Being somewhere within our world by eliminating all those places where God is not.

In primitive eras God dwelt in many exciting events. He could be localized in specially shaped trees or in non-domesticated animals, in anything, in other words, beyond Man's comprehension. As Man learned more of the nature of his world, God removed to the stars, to witchcraft, to the mysteries of birth and death, to anything beyond human ken. Such events were seen to be full of divine power. And long before Man became capable of abstract thought, he conceived an identityless but embodied power which he called *mana*. *Mana* was a power, cause, substance, and atmosphere, which was contained within certain specific things, but was never defined as to its nature, but only as to its abilities. It was the common root both of religion and of magic. It is possible that, in India, the cradle of the oldest religion still active, it crystallized into the concept of the Brahman. In other parts of India it did not. Among, for example, the hill tribes of Cutia Nagpur, *mana* is:

. . . those shifting and shadowy forces which make for evil. For *Mana* is seldom if ever felt to control the good. These forces, though they have no corporeal appearance, reside in everything. And it is they who make the venom of the snake poisonous, the cholera lethal, and the tiger predatory. The savage defines no more closely than this. He does not want to know the nature of what he fears. He only wishes to appease it.

*Mana* is a difficult concept for us to grasp, not because it is complex or abstract, but because it is diffuse and half-developed. John Murphy explains:

In other words, it is a power which is of the nature of *will*. Thus the three elements, first of mysterious power attributed by the primitive mind to the object, then of life because it moves or hears or sees, and then of *will* because it can do things beyond human power "if it likes," if it will, can easily be conceived to unite in the primitive imagination to form the

mental compound, power-life-will, which is the nature of what is called Mana wherever it is found.<sup>2</sup>

Mana, whatever else it is, is both tabu and dangerous to deal with. But, as Man's knowledge advances, it is not quite correct to say that God retreats. It is better to say that Man advances. God dwells in the unknowable. It is only that the landscape of the knowable is larger than Man ever imagines it to be, not that the unknowable in any sense diminishes, for the unknowable is not a finite quality.

As time goes on and Man establishes his dominance over the knowable, over the wild animals, the plants, and the trees, the Gods retreat to as yet inviolate symbolic seats. They become the forces of nature. They become the sun, most apt of symbols, for none of us can afford to look at the sun longer than two or three seconds or we would be blind for life, precisely because it is a tremendous life-giving force.

Geologists, astronomers, and physicists have destroyed the mystery that surrounds the stars, the sun, and natural phenomena. We have progressed a little further towards the frontier of the knowable beyond which God rests in the unknowable; but it is a frontier we can never reach. Our knowledge of the knowable in relation to our knowledge of the unknowable remains constant, no matter how far out from the central fact of our ability to know we may venture. Such is Gap Theology: God resides in the gaps in our knowledge.

There was even a time, recently, when God could be likened to the irrational factor E in biology, the factor that makes the difference between inert and living matter. This gap has also been closed by science, or at least scientists believe they have closed it. In any event laymen in our age are more eager to believe in the results of science than are the scientists themselves, as a congregation may be more certain of its faith than the pastor who deals directly with it may be of his; such mystic faith is scientism.

From the world of science God retreated into the world of history. History seemed inexplicable, and therefore God became the prime mover of historic events. But history was made explicable as an almost biological process, or as an economic one, by such men as Karl Marx or Arnold Toynbee. God therefore, despite the well-bred Monotheism of Arnold Toynbee, was seen to have retreated from

<sup>2</sup> John Murphy, *The Origins and History of Religions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949), p. 76.



history into the realms of the psychic, and, later on, into the subconscious, a region in which, since it was unexplored, the miraculous and the visionary could occur at any time, as marvels once did in the borders of ancient maps.

There God remained rooted until the subconscious became, in the hands of psychologists, another mine of nugatory factual wisdom. Once psychologists began to explore the subconscious, there were many, including the earlier psychologists, who believed that this gap, too, had been sufficiently closed to exclude God from its boundaries. No supernatural explanation was needed, it was felt, for the workings of Man's mind. The psychiatrist, like an adept plumber, could be depended upon not only to chart the system, but to plug the leak. Once more the laity had more faith in the powers of psychology to answer all questions than did many a psychiatrist, and this was the philosophy of psychologism.

So we are still left with the question, where is God? It has been the crux of many theological systems. It has given rise to much confusion, for we all attempt to localize God somewhere on one of Plato's shadow screens, instead of beyond even the most essential source of light we can conceive.

In the main there have been two types of answer to the question; the immanent and the transcendent. To those who believe in God's immanence, He resides in all things, but since He resides in all of them, He cannot be isolated in any one of them, or by means of any one of them.

The transcendent theory, on the other hand, says that God is not in any of the things we know. The transcendentalist stands in awe of the numinous, of the tremendum before which nothing else can claim existence. The transcendentalist might also be called a directionalist. He says that God exists up, or down, or beyond, or behind, or outside, anywhere but here. We will perceive Him only when all history, including ourselves, and all worlds, including our own, have ceased to be. If, for instance, the world had come to an end in the year 1000 A.D., as many transcendentalists believed it would, or if it had come to an end in 1916, as the Prophet Joshua II of Waldport, Oregon, said it would, then we would know God, for we would have come to an end too. But the world did not come to an end at either of these dates, though Joshua II was shot down by a jealous husband in the Seattle railway station shortly afterwards.

Your transcendentalist awaits the millennium. Meanwhile, he has an enormous vocabulary with which to discuss the transcendence of God.

As we investigate all these many systems of transcendentalism and immanentism, we come to the conclusion that both answers go astray and so misstate what they are really endeavoring to say. What they really want to say is that the Being of Being, to begin with, is everywhere and the basis of everything. Nothing could exist without it. But at the same time it is not so visible or so inherent in the world of appearances that we can identify it anywhere at will. In order to perceive it we need a special adjustment to its existence, some transformation of our whole approach to reality. Because of the necessity of this transformation, the doctrine called Pantheism, which says that God is immanent in all things, is a misunderstanding of the true inter-relationship between the Being of Being and the world around us.

We are very apt to jump to the conclusion that if God is not to be absolutely identified in all things, then the opposite must be true, and that he does not exist in all things or any of them, but beyond them. According to the dichotomic thinking of the western world this is the only alternative possible. We feel that the only choice is between transcendence and immanence. What is missing in this type of antagonistic thinking is that once we grant a thing to possess wholeness, then its parts are not irreconcilable. In other words both immanence and transcendence may be equally valid and coexistent. Divine reality may indeed stand beyond every moment of life in time and space, and so shine through it; but by shining through it, it also partially inhabits it, though not to the degree that it can be abstracted and isolated. If you can conceive this presence, then you can conceive several solutions to the seeming opposition of transcendence and immanence.

If we say that the Being of Being is in all things and yet not contained in them, but behind them, we do not mean behind in any specific or directional sense. We see here the difficulty that words such as behind, beyond, or within, have for us a very special spatial meaning. For us they can be only symbols, and we must not take their connotations literally, for that place where God is has none of the space-time-placement attributes of our own world. Let us say instead that all things have a certain porosity, and that the Being

of Being permeates all things as moisture permeates pumice. It does not change the nature of pumice, it is not in itself in any way connected with the nature of pumice, and the pumice retains it only as it passes through. Yet it is there and we perceive it to be there, even though its nature cannot be defined by a definition of the pumice, and the pumice cannot be defined by its reception of the moisture, or the Being of Being. We shall not destroy that Being by destroying the pumice. But neither can we define that Being by the nature of the pumice. At most we can only say that pumice by its nature is capable of receiving It.

Nor do we find God by leaving this world and trying to discover Him in some abstract place beyond what reality we know. We do not find God by dying, though proverbially we often say when somebody dies that he is now with God. How do we know that someone who has never been with God in his lifetime automatically becomes so after his death? Death alone is certainly not the means by which we are awakened to the Being of Being. Death is a physiological process, and the Being of Being cannot, as we have seen, be isolated in any physiological process.

The symbol for the interrelation of the Divine and this world is beautiful expressed in a Japanese Buddhist kakemono scroll. The scroll depicts a scroll hanging in a house with a man sitting before it, looking at it. On the scroll within the scroll the Buddha is depicted in all his glory, standing on the cloud of heaven. Beneath is the outside of the house, surrounded by a lake, grass, and woods. Above the house in the clouds of heaven is a figure of the Buddha radiating golden rays of light. The picture shows us an image at two removes, but shows us these two removes at once. Thus, though the man in the picture is absorbed in adoration, and we, watching the picture, are also absorbed in a form of adoration, we are reminded that we do not face the reality of God directly. We must penetrate that reality by slow degrees, by perceiving the light that shines through its image, as light shines through a medieval glass window.

Once we come to think of it, stained glass windows are a parable of a like order. They present us with the Virgin, the saints, and other emblems of belief. But we would not even see these emblems, were it not for the light that shines through them, yet is certainly not to be confused with them. The windows themselves are not divine.

They are merely symbols. But even as symbols they would be invisible were they not informed by a light that is itself symbolic. We are always at several removes from the Divine, though even its secondary light illumines us. It is impossible for us to approach it any closer.

Such is the interrelation between God, Man, and the world. It remains for us to establish how at the various stages of religious consciousness the interrelations among the three were conceived, beginning with primitive consciousness.

Primitive consciousness is not an integrated whole: it has no unifying principle by which it organizes data and experience. It is somewhat schizoid. It sees itself as a self-reliant entity, but also as an entity completely at the mercy of the external world. This second self it projects into whatever natural force it may by chance happen to identify with God. This force may be a thundercloud, a tiger, or a shorewader. Primitive man is equally terrified of all such things. He experiences only the tremendum. Everything is disconnected in his mind. Natural forces overwhelm him. He sees many different principles at work, and he makes as many images of God as he establishes different identities that frighten him.

When we progress from this to the Judaic-Christian tradition we are dealing with quite a different stage of consciousness. The Being of Being is no longer fragmented. Nor is the world a vast complex of conflicting and ominous forces. It is an orderly, or relatively orderly, realm in which the world and Man have a relationship to each other and also with the Divine. The Divine has been unified. It is transcendental, but Its rays distinctly strike Man, though to do so they must pass through the seven or more angelic spheres predicated by gnostic philosophers. No longer is man buffeted about in a world of irreconcilable Gods. Instead, secure in his own ego, and having unified himself, Man has also unified God. Everything now derives from one source, though it is one far beyond us. That source is still conceived as being personal enough, however, to strike directly at us through events destructive or constructive, as the case may be. God, in short, is a very definite divinity and has aimed his bow at man. The tremendum still rules the concept.

The concept of Hindu-Buddhist society is somewhat different. For the Judaic-Christian mind, the world, whether it be an immanence of God or not, definitely exists. For the Indian mind it does not ex-

ist in quite this way, but as an experience in Man's mind. To this degree Man partakes of the quality of the mind of God, in that his mind contains the world, as God's mind contains Man. If Man is to be a subjective experience of God, then the world, which is contained in Man's mind, is no less subjective for being so at two removes. Lesser fleas, said Dean Swift, of a similar situation, have fleas that bite 'em.

So the Indian looks at the world as an experience of his mind, and thus does not look at himself as a tiny particle in an immense world, but as containing the world, though he is contained in something larger than it. Man is thus a way station where God changes horses, so to speak. However, as Man, the Indian conceives that his mind, among other things, contains the world. But since Man is a figment of the mysterious mind of Brahman, and can create the world in his own mind only out of the materials with which Brahman has created him, then he is bound to find reflected in that world the holiness that created him, though at one remove. Thus, under Indian systems, Man does not commit the religious impertinence of believing that the Being of Being exists merely for him. Man is only one aspect of that Being and Its creative powers.

Let us consider the religion of Zarathustra, Zoroastrianism, whose texts we shall study presently. The ancient Persian sage Zarathustra differs flatly from almost all other religious prophets in saying that there are two worlds, not one. There is the good world and the bad world. There is the benevolent god, Ahura Mazda, and the poisonous god, Angra Mainyu. They are equal in strength, and every moment of our lives is an incident in the fight between them, the respective powers of light and of darkness. They are both, however, equally divine: They are both ultimate. They co-exist. Each is equally a source of existence. The outcome of their battle is undecided. According to Zarathustra its outcome is up to such actions as Man may take. It is, therefore, a very activistic religion, one that allows Man a positive decision in regard to his own destiny. To the Christian mind this is a heresy, as well it might be, when we remember that in its Manichean form it once almost destroyed Christianity. It is, however, a heresy that persists.

From there let us turn to the present day, which gives a picture of world-wide materialism. It is perhaps the most widespread belief of our day that everything is composed of some sort of matter. It is this



belief that makes it so difficult for us to conceive of the Being of Being at all, for materialism is so deeply ingrained in us that we find it almost impossible to conceive of the existence of anything that is *not* material.

We do not know that all things are composed of matter, for it is impossible for us to define "all things." We cannot rule out the possibility of the existence of some other order of being. Therefore when we say that all things are composed of matter, we are stating not a scientifically demonstrable truth, but a belief. Einstein would rather call matter energy, but even energy we conceive only as an infinitely fine form of matter. Within our frame of reference we find it impossible to conceive of it as anything else. Man is composed of matter and so is his brain. Therefore any thoughts produced by that brain are also matter, or energy. And if we ask about the nature of God, we may be told that it is only one of the many inaccurate ideas conceived by the matter of man's brain. It is a theory that contradicts itself, for it is a mechanistic theory, and a machine cannot make itself. It can with a little ingenuity make other machines, but it cannot make itself. It has to be made by man. And if man is also a machine, then equally, he could not have made himself. But if we unconsciously share a belief from the inside, rather than examine it from the outside, we do not ask ourselves such embarrassing questions.

However, we see here that materialism is a belief, not a science, and so once more we are forced to ask ourselves what belief is, for belief has a quality that is not the quality of the thing believed in, and that therefore must be something different. Belief, in short, is beyond belief. It is another paradox, and as such, a religious matter.

In conclusion, we must examine one other form of the relation between Man, the world, and the Divine. It is what has been called dialectical theology, and is associated with Karl Barth, in the period around 1910-1920 when he originated the new movement of Continental theology. Karl Barth sees Man and the world as inter-related, but without the significance each has in the general Judaic-Christian cosmogeny. They overlap each other, but the Divine is no longer the great illuminating life force that it was in earlier theologies. It is merely a quantity to be discovered by the empirical crossing out of all other quantities that do not belong to it. To dialectical theologians of the persuasion of Karl Barth, the Divine is what

remains when we and our world come to an end. The Divine thereby is not to be found within our life, our ideas, our religions, or our churches. It has nothing to do with us and we have very little to do with it. It is beyond any personal reaction on our part. It is rather matter of fact and prosaic. It is beyond the farthest limitations of our being, and thus has little or no part in our being. Our concern with it is thus more irrelevant than irreverent.

This conception sounds somewhat chilly, and it is chilly, but you must remember that it was produced by an exceptionally chilly world. When you are chilly you must do one of two things. Either you must seek the warmth, in which case you are an optimist; or else you must seek the ultimate in coldness. You must push yourself to extremes. This action does not altogether make you a pessimist. Yet it is perhaps a disguised form of pessimism, that taking comfort in discomfort which is akin to stoicism.

Such are the principal views of the relations among Man, the world, and the Divine. They are at any rate the main schematic outlines of such attitudes.

You may now wish to know, since after all I am describing religious experiences, in what way I color them in view of my own beliefs. You have a perfect right to do so. What is my own view of the inter-relations among God, Man, and the world? It does not seem to me that the point is particularly important, first of all because it is the duty of the scholar to be impartial, and second that when we are dealing with the great theologians and prophets of all religions, my own views seem very unimportant indeed.

Let me, so to speak, put on dark glasses to answer, for I believe that our vision of such matters is far from clear. I would say we were somewhat blinkered in the face of the Higher Reality that comes with revelation, or with our awakening to it.

Let us say, with such dark glasses, that I take a piece of green chalk and draw a picture of the world I believe in, a picture of a cross and of the Indian sign of the mandala, an image inscribed in a square. Let us say that with white chalk I then draw in the figure of Man himself, and finally that I draw some such contemporary painting as one of Dali's later religious works, say the "Crucis Atomica." As I draw these they seem to me to differ from each other. They are in different colors. I am unawakened to the higher reality that they in their varying ways represent. But when I take off my

dark grey glasses, I perceive that though I had thought to draw these things in different colors, since I was blinkered to Higher Reality, when I was no longer blinkered, I had drawn them all in the same color, say red. It is not really necessary to quarrel about whether this is the right way to perceive something or that way is. They are all ways of perceiving the Ultimate, and one is as good as another.

From this point let us try to build up a spiritual vocabulary that will be of use to us, insofar as it gives us terms with which we have no specific associations, and which we may therefore apply impartially to all faiths and doctrines. I wish to do no more. I would prefer that my own views be as neutral as possible.

As such a neutral, let me examine one more doctrine about the relationship of Man, God, and the world. It is a doctrine of peripheral importance to the central issue, but it is important to us all the same. It is the doctrine of immortality. Why do we have such a belief, what is the real meaning of it, and what is its significance? As long as we consider immortality from our unawakened viewpoint, and are dependent upon this world as we know it for our value scale, immortality can mean nothing but the prolongation of the existence in which we now find ourselves, a lengthening of the normal lifespan of man from an average of sixty-five to an average of many thousands or millions of years, such being the only grasp we have upon the concept of eternity.

When a person dies we either burn or bury him. But the part of him that exists in our memories and is the part of his death that directly affects us, is harder to dispose of. To evade our own extinction we are forced to evade the extinction of those dead before us, and for this we have the common idea of immortality, in which souls are consigned either to hell or to heaven, according to their merits. The ratio of distribution is most uneven, and one of the causes of the Reformation was the thought that out of every three hundred thousand souls who die in a year, one went to heaven, three to purgatory, and the rest to hell. To anyone capable of calculating odds, this was not a cheerful prospect, and therefore it was necessary to change it, if one was to sleep securely in one's bed at night.

Today, if we believe anything, we believe that all nice people who die around us go to heaven, or at any rate do not suffer, and we nominate only the villains of the moment for hell. The problem of heaven and hell, in other words, is no longer palpable to most of



us. We have shifted our viewpoint. Yet immortality still plays an important part in most religious cults, corrupted usually into a mere longing for longevity in any form; and very few try to discover just what the term meant to early Christianity or to the fervent periods of any faith. Instead we believe the word to mean that as personalities we will not die.

Etymologically, the world immortal means simply not-mortal. It refers to another state than that of Man's consciousness of existence. It refers to the second awakening, to the act of facing infinite reality and truth, an act that in itself wipes out the identity of this life with which we are so familiar.

Rainer Maria Rilke, the mystic Central-European poet, has written a poem about the resurrection of Lazarus in which he retells that familiar story in a new way. In the poem, Jesus sees the mourners lamenting that Lazarus is dead and exhibiting the corpse in its shroud. Jesus, however, cannot perceive that the mourners' waking life, in being spiritually unawakened, is so different from Lazarus' death, for without consciousness of the Miracle of Being life can scarcely be called life. He is angered and raises three fingers of His right hand in a magic gesture. For a moment He is afraid that His gesture might bring back to life all the dead who have ever died, but this does not happen. Only Lazarus, like a worm, creeps back into life. Jesus has awakened not the multitudinous dead, but the dead souls of the mourners. In common with all Rilke's verse, this poem discounts the absolutes of black and white that men seek to identify with reality. Rilke implies that experience is not of that sort at all. Rather, he would have us realize some of the wonder of Being. His poetry is full of it, and in his poetry it shimmers and is indistinct. Yet it is there. For Rilke, as for most mystics, it is the existence of Being, not those aspects of being that we call the world, which is important. Whether it be agreeable or disagreeable is a secondary consideration. Whether we live or die, or become, as our vain desires would wish, personally immortal, is unimportant.

The wise men of India see God in every event, whether it be pleasant or unpleasant, and besides this universal Presence, the nature of the event does not matter much. That the Being of Being *is*, is more important than *is* its nature.

## 3.

RELIGION  
AND MAGIC

SYMBOLS ARE OF MANY KINDS AND HAVE A COMPLICATED LIFE of their own. When the minstrel, in himself a symbol in blackface, sang *Mighty Lak a Rose*, he did not mean that anyone was like a rose. He was comparing qualities by terms of metaphor. That is a modern use of symbolism, but by no means conveys the meaning that the word symbol had in earlier times. For a symbol is not only a means of focusing the attention. It can also be an object of magic.

As we have seen, the word symbol is a ballistic term indicating something that is transferred from one realm of identification towards another. You have always to indicate what the symbol is symbolic of. It is the same with the word theory, which in the Greek meant a direct vision of something, an immediate realization of some truth. Today we do not employ the term theory in that way. For us a theory is merely a unifying system of thought by means of which we organize our ideas.

A symbol is not dependent for its validity upon its specific embodiment, but upon its appearance. For example, though the Portuguese of the 16th century, during a fit of religious fervor, stole the Great Tooth of Kandy, a relic of the Buddha, transported it to the mainland, and pulverized it, that tooth still resides in the stupa or shrine at Kandy. To the faithful this restoration is explained as a miracle. What really happened was probably that the monks inserted another tooth. To all intents it was the same tooth, for the symbolism inhered in the idea of the tooth and not in the tooth itself, and so was as valid in one as the other. It is only on the popular, materialistic level of a faith that symbols are in themselves

holy. To the truly religious mind seeking contact with that which is holy, they are only a convenient focal means.

So, too, with the word *idea*, from the Greek *idein*, to see. Symbol, theory, and *idea* are all methods of making visible to the mind what may not be visible to the senses, though on a primitive level all three are apt to be physically embodied. To us an *idea* has a virtually platonic existence: it exists of itself, though not as a concrete entity. It may not have for us quite the prototypical or archetypical existence it had for Plato, but still, in some way we feel it exists without needing to be palpable. However the primitive mind had not so much to make *ideas* palpable, as it was incapable of conceiving of them in any other way. Even the seer, prophet, or philosopher needs some sort of object upon which he can focus his attention, some sort of lens through which he can identify abstractions. But the primitive mind, which evolved for example the *idea* of *mana*, though it did not think of *mana* in concrete terms, at the same time always thought of it as residing in something, in fact in many different things, but did not take the additional step of conceiving *mana* to be a principle beyond and above those things.

To the ancient Greeks, however, a theory had a quality of life equally as vivid, though in another realm, as the world of phenomena. More than that, for them the theoretical had a higher and more potent form of reality. Today, in our materialistic view, we are apt to think *ideas* just the reverse of reality. Yet we have certain survivals of the notion that the ideal is a higher reality than the real. One such survival is the ceremony of the Christian mass, with its various dogmatic explanations. According to the decision of the Council of Trent, the entire substance of the bread and wine on the altar is transformed into the body and blood of Christ, the appearance alone remaining that of bread and wine as we understand it. In this dogma the word *substance* was the Latin equivalent of the Greek *idea*. To us this concept is not altogether clear, for we no longer take it for granted that all things have both an ideal and a real identity, let alone that we may change one without changing the other. We must remember that one contemporary meaning of a term may be diametrically opposed to its historic meaning. The function of a symbol, as in the bread and wine, is that it has both an ideal and a real aspect, and that its real aspect is of value only as an embodiment, convenient for use, of its ideal value.

Of course to the fundamentalist the notion that the ideational aspect of bread and wine has been changed completely into the ideational body and blood of Christ presents something of a problem, for the fundamentalist does not conceive that Christ has both an ideational and a real nature in Himself. So to the fundamentalist such an idea smacks of magic, an attempt to control the factual content of the world by irrational means, rather than as an attempt to come into contact with the ideal content of the world by means of symbolic facts. In this connection we must remember the allegory of the cave, the point of which is that the world of appearances is produced by something behind it, not by something in front of it. Indeed, in a sense the priest is a magician, who influences the nature of the real world, in this case bread and wine, by transmuting its ideal content while at the same time leaving its "real" content unaltered. The original purpose of alchemy, by the way, was just such a process of coming into contact with spiritual events by reproducing certain phenomenal processes whose ideal content was changed in the same way into spiritual process. To the fundamentalist, transubstantiation is a heresy, for since everything is as God made it, then nothing can be changed without impiety. So to the fundamentalist the sacrament is a conjuring trick. We see only what we look for, and we look for only what we already understand.

All religious concepts are infinitely more than themselves, since they are all symbolic statements, on one level or another. For example faith does not mean something less certain than knowledge. It means something more certain than knowledge. But it also means, in its religious sense, something more than anything we can possibly mean by faith. In science fiction, which might be regarded as the spiritual folklore or jataka tales of materialism, we are constantly confronted with people who, by some special effort whose exact nature is never described, escape from the world of dimensions we know into a world of dimensions we do not know; dimensions that are always conceived as being greater and higher than those we know. Scientifically this conception is as preposterous as is the theory of the presence of higher life forms on other planets, but to those who accept scientism, that is, a blind belief that science can do anything, it is quite logical and matter of fact and acceptable. By a special act of insight, the religious mind achieves liberation in the same way, but with this difference, that to the religious mind all experi-

ences of the Ultimate are in themselves total. They exist on the level of absolutes to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away. It cannot be added to, for the experience or concept is already complete. And if we take anything away from a total experience or concept, then it is no longer total, and thus faith, let us say, becomes less than faith.

We have already defined magic as an attempt to control the phenomenal world by coercing its non-phenomenal powers by means of its phenomenal ones. The definition is perhaps too simple. Magic is less a thing than a process. Henry M. Pachter says:

Magic never attempts to *suspend* the laws of nature. It is distinguished from "science" insofar as it assumes *secret powers* of nature which do not satisfy our notions of *cause and effect*. It resembles superstition in that it seeks unusual effects through unusual influences. . . . Everything in the Universe is so related to everything else that any change in one part *immediately* (not through a chain of causes and effects) implies changes in all parts. The most important of these correspondences is the one between macrocosmos (heaven, the zodiac, and the planets) and the microcosmos (the human body and its parts). Astrology assumes a one-way dependence between the two, but magic does not exclude mutual dependence.<sup>1</sup>

Though this definition does not deal with magic in its religious aspect, the process is well enough outlined. Magic is the pre-religion of primitive consciousness. It has its origins in the stage of Man's development when abstract forces are seen only as bigger examples of physical forces, not as something different in quality. To such a mind the tremendum is evoked only by a tiger bigger than other tigers, by the effects of the numinosum, not by a glimpse of it. The Gods are literally bigger men, not the embodiment of abstract principles. All forms of matter are thought to consist of the same essential stuff as does the real world around us, and the concept of non-material Being has not yet arisen. Here Science and magic come full circle. The invisible is invisible, but that is the only way it differs from the world of man, except that it is more powerful.

To a magician any symbolic object has both a phenomenal and a supernatural nature, but it does not necessarily have an ideal nature. To the more sophisticated philosopher, prophet, or theologian, a symbolic object has almost no phenomenal importance in itself, but provides either a focus upon or a parallel to some ideal process

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by permission of the publishers, Abelard-Schuman, Inc., from *Paracelsus*, by Henry M. Pachter. Copyright 1951.

of Higher Being or the attempt to come into contact with it. One of the great difficulties we have in our attempt to understand religious ideas is that we tend to confuse their symbolic embodiment with their actual nature.

This confusion can be quite dangerous, for though we can always deal with symbolic objects in terms of the laws of our own world, the laws of the higher state of being that is the object of religious thought are beyond our control, scarcely perceptible to us, and in any event totally different.

Modern theory would have it that in part the effect of magic is the result of hypnosis and mass suggestion. It is equally conceivable that hypnosis and suggestion derive their power from magic. If you add that hypnosis and suggestion derive from the moment when magic accidentally touches upon the liberation of the self that comes with religious insight into higher being, then you will begin to see some of the dangerous powers inherent in the higher religious states.

We know by now that the Being of Being is thought of everywhere, and at all times, chiefly in terms of the prevailing mentality. We can apprehend the Being of Being only in terms of our preconceived notions about the world. Thus we are apt to mistake our psychological reactions to the world about us for an insight into the nature of the Being of Being. The traces of the Miracle of Being that we can detect are fugitive. Even our reactions to finding such traces are more constant in their nature than is the appearance of those traces. This confusion is unavoidable, but at least we must train ourselves to perceive that it is a confusion.

In primitive society naturally the Being of Being is revealed, or conceived of, only in terms of primitive ideas, or of the liquid consciousness of which we shall hear more later, and of which the notion of mana is the religious form. The worldview of any people seems to them absolute, because it embraces all they know. Succeeding cultures with a wider knowledge are apt to scoff at the ultimate ideas of a culture more limited than their own. But if we envision man's intelligence and various worldviews as a series of concentric circles, we can then see that certain lines of inquiry radiate out in consistent patterns, through all the circles, and will continue to do so through circles of worldview imaginably broader than our own. Thus such a permanent idea of man as the religious impulse coming into contact with the Being of Being, though in each culture it



may vary in quality, does not vary in nature. We may find some concept of the Being of Being on all cultural levels at all times, from the liquid consciousness idea of mana up to the insights of the great mystics.

For that matter the word primitive, which means first, as a designation for the earliest stage of human consciousness is only a relative term. For all we know, the notions of evolution and progress that are now stubbornly a part of our own worldview even on the folk level, may be equally erroneous. Let us for a moment examine the ideas of evolution and progress. It is perhaps unfortunate that they both came into prominence at the same time, during the latter half of the 18th century, for they have influenced each other until each has clouded the other's nature. Evolution is a theory. Progress, however, is a belief. Evolution we have accepted as a fact, at least in our everyday consciousness. It does not actively disturb our religious ideas, because we have consigned it to a realm, the factual, in which religious ideas do not operate. Progress, however, does much mischief to our efforts to think clearly. Progress, a belief that underlies our whole present materialistic worldview and directs most of our efforts in it, is the notion that all things may automatically become better than they are if we simply increase those aspects of them which we consider to be good. The only goal of progress is more progress, and it is totally amoral insofar as its ideal of the good is always in the future and never absolutely defined, and that in the present nothing is possessed of absolute goodness, but is only better than something that previously was also not in itself good, but only less good than what we have now and better than what we had before that. The idea of progress therefore implies that nothing is as good as it could be, and that it will never be so good as it is capable of becoming. It cannot deal with the concept of evil, because it cannot believe that anything is evil except in terms of being less good than it will be. But since everything is also better than it was, then we draw away from evil as a man in a rowboat draws away from the shore. The idea of progress denies the existence of all absolutes. It is the philosophy of the unfinished, and puts all moral acts off until tomorrow, which never comes. It underlies almost all our thinking.

The idea of progress makes it difficult for us to comprehend the perfectly defensible theory held by certain scholars in the West, such



as Pater Schmidt, who attempt to prove, step by step, that as you go back in history you find a far greater religion than the one that has descended to us, an "original monotheism" that disappears in the latter stages of the development of any one particular faith. Indian philosophers also firmly believe in the idea of decadence, and their Utopias, as a result, are dated back to remote centuries. Their belief that Man was once better than he is now gives their efforts to improve him the confirmation that, in having been better once, he is at least capable of improvement. By comparison western Utopias are merely wishful thinking. Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, in which the hero, having visited the future, returns to 1887 to tell everyone how much better they are going to behave in the future, seems pathetic to us right now. To an Indian it would be incomprehensible. Indian history is notoriously without dates, for the Indian mind does not see the career of Man as a triumphant march into tomorrow. To the Indian mind, the world is an eternal present informed by memories of a vague yesterday. One of the vast differences between East and West is this different concept of the nature of time.

Buddhism and Hinduism alike conceive of their societies as having fallen into decay, as indeed they have; and as for China, everyone there may try to do as well as his ancestors, but he knows that he cannot possibly do better.

Indeed, the concept of devolution is so widespread in India that there are many descriptions of the gradual decay, not only of moral standards, but also of the body, size, and strength of all beings. Everything to the Indian is shrinking, the mountains and the oceans included. The oriental mind presents us with a shrinking rather than an expanding universe. Thus to the Jains, their first Tirthankara, or enlightened being, was 2,000 cubits in height and lived 8,400,000 years. Their twenty-fourth lived to be seventy-two and was a mere seven hands in height.

Rudolf Otto, the author of *The Idea of the Holy*, has an anecdote that illustrates such an outlook very clearly. He went to see the famous shrine in Kandy, Ceylon, where the Buddha's tooth is kept. Otto was allowed to see the tooth, though normally it is only displayed for one day in the year, and remarked to his guide that it was obviously an ox-tooth. The monk smiled. "That is what they all say," he said gently, "but I am surprised to hear you say it, for you were introduced as a great theologian. You should therefore

know that the world has been shrinking constantly, and that in the 2,500 years since the Buddha's death everything has considerably diminished in size. The Buddha's tooth is of the normal size of his time." Otto said, "If everything has shrunk, why not the tooth?" The monk disapprovingly closed the doors of the shrine. "Now I am truly disappointed in you," he said. "I know now you do not deserve the wide reputation that has preceded you. Otherwise you would know that this tooth is not a piece of secular creation, but of that of heaven." It was an ultimate rebuke. Rudolf Otto remarks that he felt defeated by this argument and went away in shame.

Decay rather than progress has usually been the philosophy of history for most ancient peoples. To us that is incomprehensible and unacceptable. We would be apt to say that, since they have made no progress, therefore they were forced to find their ideal state in the past, as a man turns back from a road that is too stony. Because our technological skills have accelerated much faster than our mental skills, we have the sensation of rushing forward to some better state. Yet the history of geologic epochs is one of progressive shortening, rather than of lengthening, and perhaps acceleration is no more than a progressive diminishment or decadence, rather than a growth.

All the same, the primitive for us means not something better, greater, or truer than what we today experience, but something thoroughly undeveloped, or by extension, underdeveloped. Whatever the truth of the matter may be, we should remember that to other races exactly the opposite seems true.

When we explore primitive consciousness, by which we mean Man in an undeveloped state, we find it governed by certain beliefs and processes that no longer govern us, at least consciously. Primitive consciousness we explore in the insane, in the child, and in certain ethnic groups in Africa, Micronesia, and Australia. We explore it, in short, where we can find it; and when, as in certain islands of Polynesia, we find that our defined primitive consciousness possesses a highly sophisticated and complex abstract moral system, we shrug it off and concentrate on the material culture instead, ignoring the fact that such material culture is entirely adequate to the moral culture, but simply has different goals than has ours.

On the whole the child is, to us, a more rewarding laboratory. As we know both from observation and from Darwinian theory, every single being of every race goes, in an abbreviated form, through

the biological development of the evolution of the race. We therefore believe that the child experiences the world in the same way that adult mankind experienced it hundreds and thousands of years ago. This belief can be highly misleading, for the muscular aptitudes and sexual desires of an adult are not those of a child, and are apt to condition his worldview quite differently, no matter how primitive he may be. At any rate we know that the laws of logic do not apply to the consciousness of a child. The world of the child is a world without labels or names. It is therefore a world directly experienced. What the child sees it sees as for the first time, and therefore a logical system of value judgments, based upon prior evidence, and the law of cause and effect, based upon much prior evidence, are inconceivable. It is here the parallel breaks down, for the child is an isolated social unit, with a distinctly egocentric worldview, and primitive society has, in its individual members, neither social isolation nor much development of the personal ego concept.

We also find primitive consciousness in our dreams. You will note that already the primitive consciousness we are looking for is an isolated, rather than a social experience, in short; except for crowd psychology, primitive consciousness in our day does not exist socially, but only personally. Our dreams follow a very different system of logic than does our daily life. We are now brought to a most essential point that we must stress before we can differentiate among the various levels of religious experience and their relative validity and limitations.

Any system of logic is merely a pattern by means of which we can establish the relative position and identity of those things apt to occur within a particular field. What we tend to forget is that there are several fields of experience, so that the logic we use to deal with one of them may not apply to another.

Just as a knowledge of inorganic chemistry is not going to help us much when we deal with organic chemistry, so logic, which deals with the rational field, is not going to help us much in the field of the irrational, where the logical processes are totally different. Dreams have a logic of their own that is valid for dreams, but invalid for everyday experience. In our daily life, according to Aristotle, A cannot be B and non-B in the same time or under the same circumstances. In dreams it can, and there is immediately set up a different pattern of cause and effect, with which logic as we know it

cannot deal. But in having a very definite pattern, it does have a logic of its own. It is possible therefore, at the other extreme, to conceive that the Being of Beings follows and possesses some system of which we cannot conceive anything but the possible existence.

All these things being granted, when we do begin to investigate what we call the primitive consciousness we find we can say certain things about it; and one of these is that it is a fluid consciousness. That is to say that nothing in primitive consciousness has hardened into a firm, solid, and unchangeable mass, for nothing has yet congealed into an absolutely irrefutable definition. Since the thought of personal ego has not congealed either, there are few barriers, referential or psychic, in the primitive world. Primitive man can therefore allow his consciousness to flow in and out and around the consciousness of others. Even among ourselves we sense those among us who share their mind and consciousness with others, and with whom therefore we have some direct but nonverbal communication. We notice this group consciousness most in cases of mass hysteria or some such mass emotion. But if we think about it, we will see that a man lives not entirely for and in his own ego, but also in the consciousness of his family, his wife, his children, his parents, and even his friends. Together they form, in the area where their consciousnesses are in communication with each other, a group consciousness that has an identity of its own. We see this interaction particularly in America, where egalitarianism has abolished the ideal of a self-contained, self-reliant personality, and where one small house shelters a small family that lives in one mentality, whose goals, desires, and habits are identical with those of other families in the same social bracket. Of course not everybody has the same consciousness to quite the same extent.

For example, when you go to the movies, you have your own reaction to what you see, but you also find yourself wondering about the reaction of the person you went with, and of the rest of the audience. You partake of that reaction, and frequently you enjoy that reaction much more than you enjoy the movie. It is sharing the feeling of others that is more important to you than experiencing your own, in that case; and it is not a matter of mere consideration, but a survival of the primitive consciousness, in the form of a collective consciousness. Modern political systems, in trying to set up such a group consciousness, are thus not progressive, but retrogres-

sive in seeking a return to primitive consciousness. They are attempting to recover a state of mind that is no longer vital, but merely vestigial, in Man.

The true way to escape from the harshness of the personal ego, and of an egocentric world, is not to revert to such a group mind, but to go towards a new consciousness that liberates the ego. It is as though, instead of releasing a caged animal into a bigger pen, we let him loose into a field without fences.

This bigger cage of the ego, this liquid consciousness, is particularly expressed in the systems of primitive thought that are called, collectively, animism.

Animism holds that everything has a soul; not only men, but animals and plants and all things. In general the human mind has more or less outgrown animism. We may think that our dog has a soul, but only because we regard our pets as extensions of ourselves, to the degree that they imitate our behavior. Historically the concept of the soul belongs to the world of enlarged or super reality, rather than to any abstract system of Higher Thought. Thus, though we may feel some mystical reaction to mountains, stars, and cosmogony, we no longer ascribe to them a soul. The cult of modern mountain climbing is not equivalent either to the notion of the quest or of the ordeal. We climb mountains, even Everest, in the same spirit as one partakes of the transubstantiated bread and wine at mass, going through a process in the real world because its spiritual or ideal nature has been transformed into higher reality. Mountain climbing is one of the few great symbolic acts of the twentieth century, and in its present form, has existed only for about 150 years. It arose, in other words, precisely at the period when other contacts with higher reality were shut off by the rise of secular thinking. It is interesting, in this connection, that the modern cult of mountain climbing was developed chiefly by Protestants. We would not go far wrong if we thought of mountain climbing as a form of physical mysticism, a sort of yoga exercise of the West.

Primitive man would give a super-real soul not only to animals and to plants, but even to the stones, tools, implements, and weapons with which he is surrounded. On this level he experiences the tremendum. He is frightened of these things. His universe is not sufficiently ordered so that he can glimpse the greater tremendum beyond the one he feels. He is the chained man in the Platonic cave,



not the philosopher who got free and saw the fire behind him. Just as certainly, he is not the philosopher of modern civilizations, who seeks the fire beyond all perceptible fires.

This tremendum experienced before everyday objects led to a system called Pandemonism. Pandemonism is a very early attempt to conceive of a nonmaterial force. It is the demonic power within us that is projected into all things in the world, a vague perception of the Being of Being presented as a devil mask. It is present in early animistic concepts of liquid consciousness. Man felt the tremendum before he felt the fascinosum, for the fascinosum requires a certain security in the individual, so that he may reflect, and of this primitive man had almost none.

Pandemonic power is called mana. Mana renders things un-touchable, through a fear of their power to upset the world. Mana is thus held to be tabu, but in itself bears no moral weight. It is a force beyond good or evil, existing independent of man, but must be placated by him in the interests of his own safety. Thus in the Old Testament, you may read of the servant who accompanied the Ark of the Covenant:

And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio the sons of Abinadab drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir-wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it: for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.<sup>2</sup>

Uzzah fell down as soon as he touched the ark, for he was not a priest, and as a laymen had touched something so holy that he was struck by its power, because he was not insulated against such power. This idea appalls us. Primitive man it did not. To primitive man, who lived and lives in a world that is inimical to himself since he has control over none of it, the supernatural is only something so much stronger than he that contact with it destroys him. This is the tremendum experienced on a physical, rather than an evaluative, level. In such a world of opposed forces, there could be no

<sup>2</sup> Samuel II: 6.

moral weight, either for good or evil. Mana can destroy primitive man, not of intent, but simply because it is so much stronger than he is. Primitive man, living in an involuntary rather than a voluntary world, has no such ultimate concept of good and evil. He can conceive only of safe and unsafe.

The next step in religious development is totemism. Totemism is a widespread belief capable of considerable elaboration and sophistry. One finds it among the American Indians, in most primitive tribes everywhere, and in modern terms, in such embodiments as Uncle Sam, the Fatherland, Britannia, or, for that matter, the Loyal and Benevolent Order of Elks. The main content of totemism is a feeling of man's relation to the unknown and of his interrelation with all other creatures. The identification is immediate, and the famous French anthropologist Levy-Bruhl has called it "mystical participation."

For example, a Haida Indian chief may tell you that he is a white eagle, a member of the family of white eagles, and instances are not unknown of his having a white eagle living outside his house. By this he does not mean to say that he is a white eagle because he would like to soar as does the eagle; nor does he mean that he and his family have certain moral and physical, or even ancestral, physical characteristics in common with the white eagle. Nor is he making a comparison or simile. Finally, he does not even conceive that his ideal self and the eagle's ideal self belong to the same clan of ideas. He means, quite flatly and simply, that he is a white eagle. The connection is direct and irrational, and it is an attitude of mind that has survived down to the present. You may discover it alike in family heraldry and in your membership in such orders as those of the Lion or Elk. As such you are the last man on the totem pole, a link in a chain that goes many generations back, and it makes you feel less alone to be so. Primitive man felt the same way when he said he was an eagle.

Totemism gives one a feeling of continuity that transcends the individual ego. A great deal of that feeling survives in contemporary Japan, where the daughter of the family, let us say, feels herself to be of greater importance as the daughter of the family than as an individual person. As a daughter of the family, she has a definite position and function, sanctified by generations of assigned functions in the family unit, and her importance even to herself is that



of the present embodiment of that function. This function looms larger for her than does any consciousness of self. That one should have importance not by reason of the self, but by reason of one's place in the social pattern, makes such practices as suicidal warfare conceivable, natural, and even commendable to the Japanese mind, although they are totally repugnant to the more egocentric Occident. For much the same reasons, an American life insurance company once experienced extreme difficulty in selling its product to the Chinese. It could convince a Chinese that when he died a certain amount of money might accrue to his widow; but it could not make him understand why anyone should give him a certain sum of money for dying, for to him it was less a personal act than a part of the functioning of the family unit. So the phoenix immolates herself on her pyre because that is the assumed thing for her to do. She emerges as the same phoenix, but not as the same embodiment of the phoenix. Such an idea lies alike behind the attitude of the Japanese suicide squad, Chief White Eagle, and the Chinese gentleman puzzled about his life insurance, but it is a concept of the ego totally alien to the present western mind, surviving, if at all, only among those who hold hereditary titles.

It is also a concept that lends itself very well to the practice of magic, for if both the individual man and the ego of man are of value on the same level with stones, mountains, or natural forces, but on no other, then they are susceptible to the same laws of cause and effect, and the same techniques can be used for dealing with them. Hence magic, a method of dealing with something bigger than one's self by establishing control over something smaller of whose nature it partakes. Since an eagle and a man who says he is an eagle are the same thing, and a small image of the man is the man, too, whatever is done to the small image will happen also to the man and the eagle. A man is made of the same stuff, so a nail paring will do as well as an image of him. Primitive magicians are all great cooks; and like all cooks, they deal not so much in boiling and baking, as in flavors, textures, smells, and proportions. The dried blood of the toad has all the properties of the toad, just as a nail paring has all the properties of the man. Your primitive magician will evoke rain by urinating on the ground, a sympathetic process. He does exactly the same thing the rain does, as far as he is concerned. In the same way Zeus, Hermes, and Poseidon, in

Greek mythology, gave birth to Orion by micturating into a cow-hide that was then buried for nine months. Magic is extremely direct.

Usually one distinguishes magic into two kinds, black and white. This distinction is entirely that of civilization, and does not exist in primitive consciousness. Magic, to the primitive mind, is simply magic. It is the end products of magic only that are good or bad. If you work magic to destroy one hundred of another tribe, the magic is good to you and bad to that tribe. The magic act itself is neither. White magic is something that brings about good to those practicing it; black magic brings about bad to those on whom it is practiced. The act may be the same. Therefore we must conceive of a grey magic; a department, indeed, into which most magic falls. Grey magic includes the use of good magic for dubious ends, and dubious magic for good ends. To the primitive mind good and evil are barely grasped. What matters is whether the magic is dangerous or not, whether it is safe or unsafe. We will do better to speak of the differences of magic as magic by touch, by analogy, and by name only, or incantation.

Magic by touch is probably the most widespread primitive device. It is the oldest type of magic. It survives in the Church in the custom of blessing and ordaining a priest by the direct laying on of hands. The Royal Stuarts of England and Scotland were supposed to be able to cure the King's evil, an ambiguous ailment that consisted of fits, merely by touching the subject. Faith healers of this sort are still among us.

As with the Stuarts, so with the clergy: the direct carry-over of an almost electric power from one ordained priest to the one next to be ordained was far more important than, for example, the moral probity of the priest himself and had no relation to it. Magic and morals in no sense overlap.

Magic by touch has the disadvantage that it is a physical act requiring the presence of the magician; and it was inevitable that it should be replaced by some more sophisticated device. This necessity produced the second type of magic, magic by analogy, which we have already cited in the making both of rain and of Orion. Thus it was no longer necessary to touch the patient. Now one might instead touch something belonging to the patient with equal efficacy. Such magic by analogy usually consists of drawing a picture of the

person to be affected. Then one treats the picture as one would the victim, with medicines, poisons, small arrows, or pins. When evoked with the correct incantations, the spirit of the arrows will then flow into the particular arrow aimed at the victim and so kill him. The same process may be used for love spells.

Analogous magic abounds. You repeat the process you wish to have take place in conjunction with some fragment of the person or thing to which you wish it to occur. It is still with us, in people who carry a lock of someone's hair, something a loved one has worn, or even a photograph of a movie star or the ikon of some saint.

The next step in the sophistication of magic is to dispense with the analogous and with all tokens either of the process you wish to reproduce, or of the thing or person in which you wish to reproduce it. One step farther, and you work magic by incantation, and specifically, by using the names both of the process desired and the object upon which the magic is wrought. Of course a name to a magician is not the same thing as a name is to us.

At first glance, it would seem that the modern world does not put this emphasis upon the magic of names. Yet you will see that when someone calls us by some nickname whose use is restricted to our intimates, we are resentful, as though he were intruding upon our intimate life. Many people change their names for luck, to mark some turning in their lives, just as primitive societies do, and do so only after consulting their astrologer. A monk entering a monastery, or a woman a marriage, goes through much the same procedure. Names still have connotations for us. As in Europe certain titles and names give us much information about the people who bear them, so in America, the character of a Byrd, DuPont, Saltonstall, or an Astor is something more than the character of the specific individual who bears that name, and he in his turn takes on certain characteristics that seem to inhere in that name. Again, we are confronted with such things as the Convent of the Holy Name, the name, understood rather than stated, which is holy in itself.

In ancient times these magical properties, actually analogous qualities, of the name were much more pronounced. Therefore the name was secret and sacred, secret because it was sacred, and given by a priest. For everyday life the primitive child used another name, for if he used his secret and holy name, then magic could be

worked against him by means of it, just as his nail parings or hair could be so used.

Analogous magic, incidentally, explains not only the legend of Samson and Delilah, but also the vague uneasiness many people experience at the barber's when they see their fallen hair swept up into a corner. Children are particularly disturbed by this sensation. They want to know what is being done with this part of them, and when they see it burnt, they are apt to become alarmed or ill. Primitive people disposed with great care of their nail parings and hair clippings. In the wrong hands these things could be a source of danger. So, too, with their names.

The most widespread magical use of names is that known as abracadabra. Abracadabra is actually an Arabic phrase, abra meaning to vanish or shrink; ca, a Semitic comparative meaning like, as, or in a way, and dabra the verb to speak. When you say abracadabra and couple it with the name of your enemy, the enemy must vanish. To enhance the effect by analogy, you diminish the phrase also, saying first abracadabra, then bracadabr, then racadab, then acada, then cad, and finally a.

ABRACADABRA  
BRACADABR  
RACADAB  
ACADA  
CAD  
A

You have then exhaled the whole word, and diminished your enemy in the process. Once the final sound of the single a has stopped vibrating, your enemy dies.

We all have this feeling about our names. We want to "pass on our name." Our worst disgrace is an unmarked grave in potter's field. Stephen Vincent Benét once wrote a short story in which the explorers of the ruins of New York were greatly puzzled by an inscription that read simply ington. We of course knew this referred to Washington, but to Benét it was a symbol of how we may lose identity in time. It is a fear that haunts all tyrants, and all great men, who like to write their name in a large hand. Thus, though not one statue of Mussolini remains standing in Italy, his name remains on the Obelisk in the Foro Italico, for the Obelisk was too

large to be destroyed. It was on his part a piece of abracadabra in reverse.

Magic of this sort has almost infinite ramifications, which even today permeate our whole culture. The ideas behind it also helped to produce art and sculpture. Nowadays, with the exception of propaganda posters, we make images of things to preserve them, rather than to destroy them. Even abstract and abstract expressionist art, which at first glance might not seem to perform this function, is chiefly devoted to preserving some specific transitory emotional reaction or even the emotion itself in terms of symbolic or referential use of line, mass, and color.

Art began when primitive man inscribed bones and drew upon his caves images of the herds of bison or whatever he thus hoped to evoke in the woods and fields outside. He conjured up a food supply. It is probable that Cro-Magnon man divided his images into two sorts because of their two functions. When he wished to evoke a herd of game, he drew it as realistically and splendidly as possible, in order to get better game. But when he wished to make use of the magical quality of a hunt, he drew it in its holy, heraldic, and symbolic embodiment, nonrealistically, with stick figures. Thus the inhabitants of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, the pre-Aryan civilization centers of Pakistan, were capable both of a depictive sculpture equal to that of the later Greeks and at the same time, probably for religious purposes, of statues that by comparison look downright archaic, until we remember that in terms of time the superb realistic sculpture was also archaic.

The art of any religion is always heraldic and stiff, until its development reaches the point where the religion is a social rather than a spiritual institution, when the ikons become humanized. It is only after that stage that they once more become ideal.

The primitive mind does not create the ideal. In the caves of 20 or 30,000 B.C., in Sweden, Morocco, and Spain, he painted the simulacrum of the effect he wanted, with superb effect, but not out of an admiration of art for its own sake. These paintings were magical acts, rituals performed before the hunt, for the purpose of augmenting the herd; indeed, the act of assuming the name of hunter lent the artist a hunting power that otherwise he would not have had.

Even in the modern mind, there is a difference between the man who accidentally shoots an elephant and the hunter of elephants.

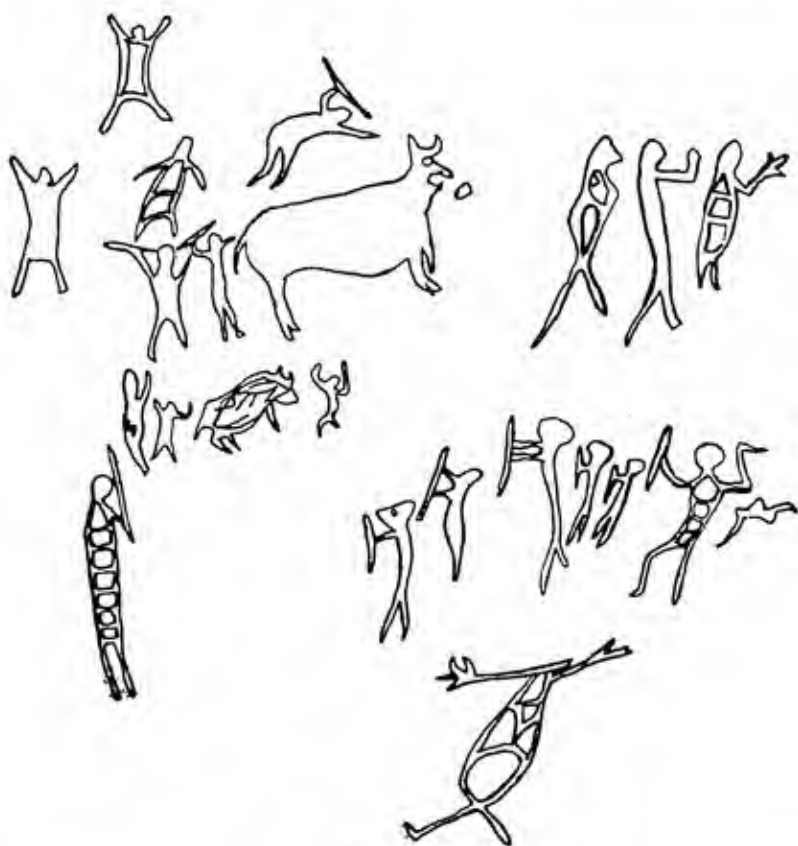


PLATE ONE

Prehistoric Neolithic Ruddle (Haematite) from India. A magic picture probably designed to assure a successful hunt (coll. S. C. Roy). Redrawn from: Radha Kumud Mookerji, *Hindu Civilization* (Delhi & Bombay: Rajkamal Publications, Ltd., 1950).



There is magic in the name. People believed in primitive times that they took unto themselves the powers of a thing in assuming the name of it. Even today, to call a man who has stolen a thief is far worse than to say that a man has stolen something. For it changes his identity as a person. This principle lies even behind the laws of libel and slander.

To the primitive mind magic has a quality it does not have for us. To the primitive mind the matter-of-fact world as we understand it does not exist. To the primitive, all experience and all things are controlled by magical process. This control is particularly evident in the way in which he regards his actions. Today, we may dream that the man next door, whose driving we regard with suspicion and whom we suspect of not liking us, has run over us and broken our legs. The dream may upset us, but it will never do anything more than that. But if the savage dreams that his next-door neighbor is attempting to do him physical damage, he knows that his next-door neighbor has come over into his consciousness to do just that, and he takes steps accordingly. Nor will the man next door be astonished to receive what to us would be an inexplicable thrashing. On the contrary, he will know that he is being punished for something he attempted to do in his sleep last night, even though he has forgotten about it.

In particular, death, to the primitive consciousness, is not an inevitable physiological process, but a deliberate act against him committed by means of witchcraft. The internecine feuds that exist in all primitive societies are based on exactly this conviction that when one of your relatives dies, then one of your enemies has killed him by witchcraft. The idea that all men are by nature mortal is inconceivable to the savage. Its absence has often hindered the advances of the missionary, for when the missionary exhorts his flock, "Of course you know we all have to die. You have to die, and I have to die. Therefore. . . ." His native flock does not listen to the therefore, but will ask how he knows this to be so, for there are a lot of people who have not yet died, and unless they are destroyed by witchcraft, there is no reason why they should not go on living. Every death is a murder to the primitive consciousness. Therefore the primitive is obliged to discover the murderer to avenge the death.

So to the primitive mind, the factual world cannot be said to ex-



ist as we know it. It is almost as though it were in itself numinous. Even its numinosity is only partially perceived, only the *tremendum* being present, not the *fascinatum*. Worship, to the primitive mind, is not adoration, adoration is inconceivable; it is only exorcism or placation.

Such a concept of the world suspends what we today consider to be the "factual" laws of cause and effect. The primitive can deal with events, not empirically, but chiefly on the basis of the oracle. To the primitive consciousness every event has two causes, one of which is the obvious or visible cause, and the other the annunciatory cause. Thus everything in the primitive world takes place on two planes simultaneously, so that the call of a bird that announces a death is indistinguishable from the actual cause of the death, and indeed is the cause of the visible cause of death. Even today we believe in such auguries and oracles.

I recently read of an explorer who had hired a crew of boatmen to row him up an African river. Suddenly one day they reversed paddles and began to row downstream. He wanted to know why, and learned from an unwilling native that they had heard a black-bird shouting on the right shore. If they had gone on with the trip they would therefore all have perished. They reversed direction instinctively, to contradict the oracle by changing the circumstances to which it applied. The cry would now come from the left side and so be nullified. Later they could continue upstream. The explorer was annoyed; yet it is quite possible that he believed in the family tradition that when his grandfather died the clock at home had stopped at the exact moment of death.

Primitive consciousness has one way to defeat such simultaneous causes. The oracle can always be deceived by interpreting it in a different way. For example astrologers, when their predictions are at fault, find an error in their initial calculation, and by correcting the error, make the horoscope conform satisfactorily to such events as formerly disproved it. By such practice very few horoscopes ever have a truly bad significance, except retroactively, which pleases everybody; and the same is true of all modern survivals of augury, from the casting of joss sticks to the practice of palmistry.

We now come to the question of the relation between magic and religion. We might almost say that magic is an experience of the *tremendum* in the absence of an experience of, or awareness of, the

numinous. The numinous is not experienced in the world of magic because the tremendum does not have a focal point in the primitive consciousness, for primitive society exists in a tremendum. It is impossible for the man struck down by a windstorm to know whether he is in a hurricane or a cyclone.

Magic is the stage from which religion will emerge; it is a state of pre-religion. Primitive man is struck by the Being of Being, but he does not know it, for, having experienced nothing but the tremendum, he has no way of knowing that it is the numinous that he is experiencing and not its effect. He is always in the process of it, therefore he cannot gauge the effect of it; and cause and effect being inseparable concepts, he cannot perceive a probable cause either. Primitive consciousness has no eschatology.

If we look to the oldest religious texts of the surviving religions; at the *Vedas*, the *Rig-Veda* and the *Atharva-Veda*, we can perceive how magic rituals slowly become religious sacrifices.

The difference seems to have its crux in the anthropomorphic personalizations that arise, but can only take place when primitive society has progressed to the point where it recognizes the individual and unique status of the definite personality of Man, and reflects this new knowledge against the unknown in terms of personalized Gods. How the process takes place we do not quite know, but it may possibly arise when circumstances force upon each member of a primitive society a concept of personal property, and through property, of a personal and egocentric self.

In the *Atharva-Veda* particularly are to be found many magical formulas of the type used in primitive society by the witch doctor. The witch doctor will anoint an injured person and so heal him, but if he does cure him, the means of the cure is not in the chemical quality of the herbs employed, but in their magical quality. To evoke the magical quality he will have to speak its name in the form of incantations.

Thus the *Atharva-Veda* contains such things as a Charm to Grow Hair:

Born from the bosom of wide earth the goddess, godlike plant, art thou:  
So we, Nitatni! did thee up to strengthen and fix fast the hair.  
Make the old firm, make new hair spring, lengthen what has already  
grown.

Thy hair where it is falling off, and with the roots is torn away,  
I wet and sprinkle with the plant, the remedy for all disease.<sup>3</sup>

There are also charms to bless a child, to destroy hostile priests, to heal a broken bone, to bless a first tooth, to protect one against sterility, or to improve the crops. It may seem to us odd to find a recipe book as a religious text, but then we must remember that the Old Testament informs us of how to slaughter an ox and bake bread. Such incantations are repeated a number of times. Thus the charm will cure a broken limb, and since broken limbs always heal, it is clear to the primitive mind that the magic has worked. If it does not work, it is only because someone spelled a different magic that was even stronger. The natural processes are unrecognized. It is magic that does the work. For that matter, much modern medicine is based upon magic, for the search for the philosopher's stone and the sovereign remedy has shifted from alchemy to chemistry, and the mind of man still believes in the existence of a universal remedy, until it is discredited, whereupon he soon finds another. Thus sulfa drugs gave way to penicillin, which in turn gave way to aureomycin, and, although efficacious in themselves, they also work cures in the same field of magic where formerly the hymns of the *Atharva-Veda*, snake oil, or Dr. Ambruster's Original Okefinokee Sovereign Elixir and Home Remedy worked their wonders, or the family doctor dealt firmly with such afflictions as vapors, Grief, Imposture, Megrim, Mother, Tissick, Bleach, and Tympany.

To the primitive consciousness, magic is never discredited, for if one formula fails, another will not. So magic persists. In 1954, some 1,200,000 people assembled during January at a particularly holy spot in India to assist the sun by frightening away the demonic black planet that was covering it. In order to accomplish this result, the men had to dance, bathe, purify themselves, speak holy formulas, and perform a great deal of magic. Their efforts were entirely successful. Magic had been vindicated. The practice of driving away the swallower of the sun and the swallower of the moon during eclipses is as old as mankind, and always successful. Thus the primitive consciousness sees no reason to abandon the practice.

Most of the magic formulas to be found in the *Atharva-Veda* are

<sup>3</sup> T. H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Atharva-Veda* (London: Luzac and Co., 1895), p. 256.

of this automatic type. Their magical effect is immediate. They are not dependent upon an omnipotent deity for their efficacy, so they are not addressed to one. The liquid consciousness of primitive man could not conceive of one if it wished to do so, which of course it did not. The deity concept arises only with the individuation of Man.

On the other hand, the *Rig-Veda* has formulas addressed to specific deities. It is a somewhat later work, subsequent upon the rise of the concept of the individual ego. Yet such higher conceptions by no means disqualify the simple ritual magic incantations of the *Atharva-Veda*, which are used together with more sophisticated prayers. The two may seem outwardly antagonistic to each other, but they go hand in hand, for man also has a double mind.

We must examine now the early deities to be found in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*; the sacred texts of India, for they illustrate certain things about the nature of the process by which Man creates his deities. The conceptual mind of Man is limited by certain almost inevitable conditions whose origins are difficult to discover, let alone interpret. But we do know certain things. One of the tools of the mind is analogy. Thus a people whose life is based upon herding and the increase of game, will tend to have preponderantly male and seminal gods. Those who are chiefly dependent upon crops will tend to have chiefly female deities, as did the original pre-Aryan inhabitants of India. A culture that has conquered another tends to absorb its deities into its own pantheon, and the difficulty of matching the largely male pantheon of the Aryans to the largely female of the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India may have had something to do with the somewhat unusual feature among the more recent religions of Man, that the chief deities of the Hindu pantheon have both female and male counterparts, identities, and often, reincarnations, or avatars.

## 4.

## VEDAISM

THIS BOOK IS DEVOTED TO THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LIVING religions, and of those, only the faiths that number their followers at least by the million, and so might be regarded as major. The oldest of these is the complex of creeds unified into a rough system, or series of systems, which we call Hinduism. We shall examine Hinduism at considerable length, not only because it holds a prime and original place among the surviving faiths, but also because, in one degree or another, it has been germinal to almost every one of them, either directly by infiltration of ideas or as a reaction against it. Because of the enormous complex of the various Indian populations, the religions of India represent very nearly the whole field with which the science of religions is concerned, summed up in one complex.

Added to these reasons for the study of Vedaism, we find it said that:

"It is of historic interest that as a subject of investigation, this science began with the study of Sanskrit by European scholars about the middle of the last century and the discovery that there was one great Indo-European family of languages, from which most of the Western languages, the tongues of modern civilized peoples, were derived, as well as the language in which the ancient literature of India had been composed by the dominant and ruling classes in the country who were of Indo-European stock, and probably called themselves Aryans.<sup>1</sup>

Of the pre-history of India we know astonishingly little, and are only now beginning to know more. Our knowledge that it had a well-developed civilization chiefly dates from 1924, when the great cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were first discovered. They

<sup>1</sup> John Murphy, *The Origins and History of Religions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949), p. 238.

predate the Aryan invasion by at least a thousand years, and since they attest to an orderly and well-developed culture, probably by longer than that. From their remains we can at least be certain that the *Vedas* are not entirely Aryan, but almost certainly contain elements of the autochthonous Indian culture that the Aryans not so much overthrew as conquered, and some of whose practices they must have absorbed. Thus it has been claimed that the brahmin may not have been the highest Aryan caste at all, indeed at times it yielded that place to the warriors, but that the brahmin may have been a native Indian priest, taken into the Aryan household in order that the conquerors might have some hold over the religion of the conquered peoples. However that may be, certainly certain features of Hinduism, or Vedic practices for that matter, such as ritual bathing and its importance, and goddesses of field or fertility, were well-entrenched at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa long before the Aryans were heard of. And since the infiltration and conquest of India was no sudden thing, but a matter of centuries, the admixture of the two religious strains was probably quite thorough.

Nonetheless, the Vedic songs are extremely ancient, for the Nordic invaders brought them with them when they first invaded northern India, some 3,500 or more years ago. The Vedic hymns contain enough meteorological and astronomical information to place the region of their composition somewhere in the uplands of northern Asia, and even at the time of their introduction into India they were already old.

As poetry they show great merit, but our interest in them is of another order. To those who first employed them they had a magical significance, being almost prescriptions governing the use of certain tools, implements, and rituals. They had when they were at last set down, and certainly have now long outgrown their original purpose, which was magical incantation. Glosses upon them had already adapted them to higher religious use, much as the Song of Solomon, an erotic canticle, has been interpreted by us as a spiritual parable.

Two tigers have grown up who long to eat the mother and the sire:  
Soothe, Brahmanaspati, and thou, O Jatavedas, both these teeth.

Let rice and barley be your food, eat also beans and sesamum.  
This is the share allotted you, to be your portion, ye two teeth.

Harm not your mother and your sire.



Both fellow teeth have been invoked, gentle and bringing happiness.  
 Elsewhither let the fierceness of your nature turn away, O teeth!  
 Harm not your mother or your sire.<sup>2</sup>

This is little more than a verbal teething ring. It could be made religious only by interpreting it symbolically. The *Atharva-Veda* is full of such recipes. They are common to all religions that evolve from tribal lore, rather than the inspiration of a particular prophet.

Darius Milhaud, in one of his song cycles, has set some advertisements he found in a seed catalogue. The text is most specific and most practical. The setting is lyrical and vague. He has interpreted these receipts in terms of our emotions at the turn of the seasons and the approach of the new leaf. It is doubtful that Darius Milhaud is an ardent gardener. It is equally doubtful that, in interpreting his seed catalogue in song, he knew the practical significance of the directions he set. The interpreter of the Vedic hymns was in a similar condition.

The *Vedas* include, among other matters, exact directions for the use of tools and implements employed for the correct execution of an animal sacrifice upon a clay altar to a specific deity. The nature of the deity has changed, and it is several thousand years since the sacrifice was last offered in its original spirit. Therefore some other use had to be found for the text, since it was holy. It is as though I had taken the motor out of an automobile of an outmoded make, which would not run, and converted it into a generator for the manufacture of electricity.

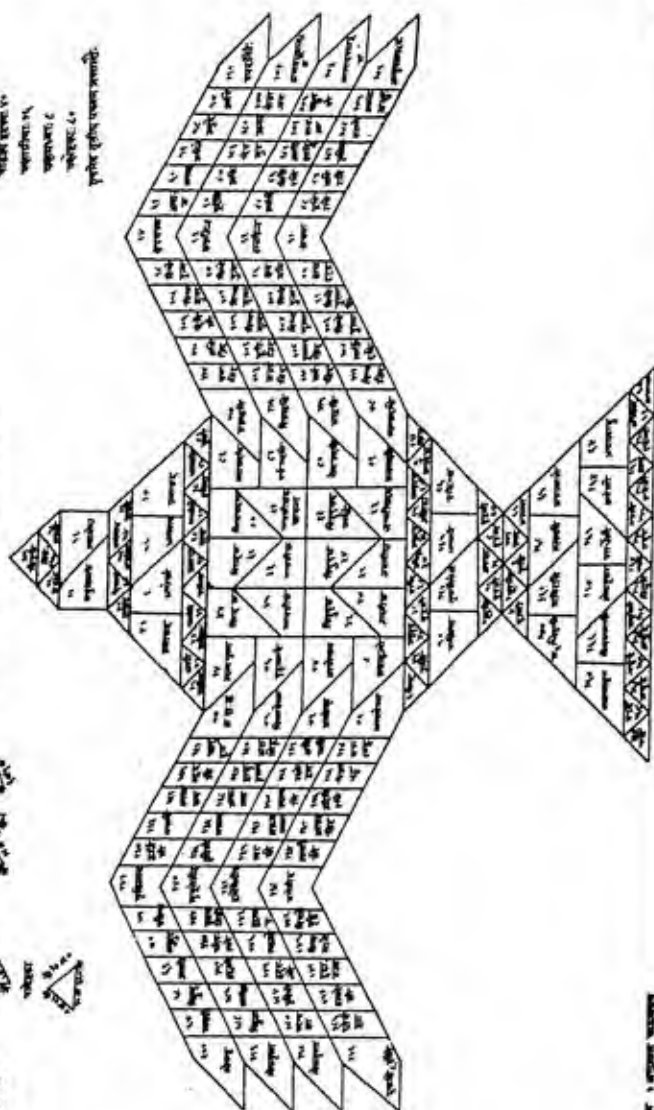
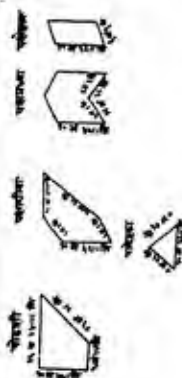
Thus, in the *Satapatha-Brahmana*, we may read that:

Verily, the dawn is the head of the sacrificial horse, the sun its eye, the wind its breath, Agni, the fire belonging to all men, its open mouth. The year is the body of the sacrificial horse, the sky its back, the air its belly, the earth the under part of its belly, the quarters its flanks, the intermediate quarters its ribs, the seasons its limbs, the months and half-months its joints, the days and nights its feet, the stars its bones, the welkin its flesh, the sand its intestinal food, the rivers its bowels, the mountains its liver and lungs, the herbs and trees its hair, the rising sun the forepart, and the setting sun the hindpart of its body, the lightning its yawning, the thundering its whinnying, the raining its voiding urine, and speech its voice. The day, indeed, was produced as the cup before the horse, and its birth-place is in the eastern sea. The night was produced as the cup behind it,

<sup>2</sup> Griffith, *The Hymns of the Atharva-Veda*, pp. 323-324.



# प्रथमः प्रस्तारः इयनचिन्तिः कु.य.नै.सं.४।५कां.



and its birthplace is in the western sea: these two cups, indeed, came to be on both sides of the horse. As a steed it carried the gods; as a racer, the Gandharvas; as a courser, the Asuras; as a horse, man. The sea, indeed, is its kindred, the sea its birthplace.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Rig-Veda* the horse was sacrificed only by kings, and among kings, only by those who aspired to world dominion. The horse was allowed to wander for a year before being sacrificed; an army followed it and endeavored to conquer anyone who challenged the horse. The primitive magical mechanics involved in this procedure are relatively clear. By the time the later *Satapatha-Brahmana* had interpreted the sacrifice, however, the horse had become a metaphysical symbol as detailed as the figure of God in the Cabbalistic Books. The process is repeated with the entire mechanics set forth in the *Rig-Veda*.

At the same time, there still exists in Poona a school where the sacrificial ritual of the *Vedas* is taught literally, by means of hundreds of archaic instruments made specially for the purpose and having no other use. During the last twelve years only two students have been studying at this academy, despite the fact that it offers fellowships. The students find it difficult to gain employment in their chosen field, once the twelve years of study are completed. Except by these two, however, the Vedic sacrifices are no longer performed. The *Vedas* themselves, by means of interpretation, are

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#### PLATE TWO

The Vedic sacrifice had a most elaborate ritual. This diagram shows the arrangement of the sacrifice in a bird-shape, as reconstructed by the Mīmamsa Institute at Poona. For research purposes, the German Indologist Martin Haug had a Vedic sacrifice reconstructed and celebrated at great cost, as a mock ritual, in 1863. The project was undertaken because an understanding of the ritual would inevitably lead to a better understanding of the *Vedas* themselves. The ancient Brahmana tradition shows us how the ritual was in time elaborated into a highly complicated system. The bird-shaped fire altar consisted of 1000 to 10,000 bricks, each laid in position with a special Vedic mantra, symbolic values being attributed to each brick and each act of the sacrificial process. The precise measurements this construction demanded led to the elaboration of the science of geometry. Every section of the altar corresponds to one of the parts of the body.

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<sup>3</sup> Max Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*.

still alive. Much of the wisdom of Man is devoted to adjusting his past knowledge to his present circumstances.

When we ourselves study these songs we put our chief emphasis upon the names of the devas that are described. The word deva is usually translated by god or gods, for there are hundreds of different devas described in the *Vedas*. The word deva comes from the Indo-European root *div*, to shine, or to be bright; the word *Veda*, from the root *vid*, which is cognate to our word wisdom or wit. The forces called deva are therefore the bright, shining forces. The devas are gods with a small g, for the idea of God, like that of the Miracle of Being, is all-embracing and thus cannot have more than one identity. The same is true of the Divine, or of any other ultimate religious concept. As soon as you fragment such totals, you are not talking about the essential character of divinity, or the Being of Being, but only about its lesser personifications. We must conceive of the devas as being nature forces, angelic powers, or the apex of concentrated energies, but they cannot be confused with the concept of the Divine itself.

As we go through the many devas named in the *Rig-Veda* hymns, we can more or less trace the evolution of the concept of a God from the magical to the personificatory level, and ultimately, to the concept of God as a totality. The process is an elaborate and historic one. In the *Rig-Veda* you first find only two major classes of elementals, the devas and the asuras. The word *sur* means shining or to be bright, and the *a* is the negative to be found in all Indo-European languages, which takes away the meaning of the word to which it is prefixed. The word also means a non-drinker or teetotaler. The Aryans were a hard-drinking lot. Thus, in origin, the asuras may have been the Dravidian or pre-Dravidian gods of the conquered India, as opposed to the devas, or gods of the Aryan conquerors.

At any rate, the devas and the asuras refer to the opposed powers of light and of darkness, though the opposition is not so total as we in the West conceive such oppositions to be. Our Christian tradition leads us to believe that the bad is inferior to the good. In the *Vedas*, on the other hand, bad and good are equal forces. There is no moral weight attendant either upon the goodness of the devas, nor upon the badness of the asuras. They merely represent existent forces.

This type of clash between two very different types of divine and

equal forces occurs in many religions. It occurs, among us, in the Nordic *Edda*, and as such is portrayed in the *Nibelungenlied*. There you find the Asen and the Vanen, probably the deities of two different tribes that later merged. At the time they were recorded in the *Edda* they were no longer competing, any more than they were in the *Vedas*, but traces of such competition may be detected alike in both. This similarity is not surprising, since they had their origins in a common prototype.

Such conflicting deities portray remote and basic natural forces once immediately worshipped, but then rendered so distant by Man's subsequent religious concepts as to become relatively unimportant. Dyaus Pitar is one of these forces. He is mentioned very few times in the entire *Vedas*, where he is the sky father. He survives, but in the alien world of his descendants, who have long ago taken over his functions, and his importance is negligible. The same word and concept occur in western culture as Zeus Pater, that is, Father Zeus, and in Latin as Jupiter. Zeus Pater is mentioned as the father of all beings, but no cult revolves around him. Local manifestations of Zeus are worshipped instead. Such devolutions may be found in all societies; Jehovah went through a like process.

Missionaries in Polynesia, when they were trying to translate the Bible into local terms and attempted to deal with "In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth," experienced considerable difficulty in finding, among the local gods, any prime mover whom they could identify with God Himself. When they inquired of the natives, they were told, "Oh yes, you mean Bayami or Daramulun. Yes, we know about him, but that was so long ago. We have lost interest in him, and he has lost interest in the world. It is true he created the world, but afterwards he sailed away and has never returned. So why address prayers to him?"

It is as though there were a vast storehouse in the mind of Man, into which, one by one, are carried the discarded Gods, which have been found inferior to the new model. Indeed, among primitive peoples, peoples not so primitive, and in the play of children, it is necessary to make a fresh image of the God each year, each decade, or whenever it is decided upon. Every religious literature in the world is such a storehouse, full of once important but long abandoned concepts. So Dyaus Pitar is to be found in the *Vedas*. There is little point in offering him prayers. He is half forgotten.

Among the devas you may find Indra, who is king of all of them; the Maruts, or double stars; the Asvirs; Ushas, the morning dawn; and many others. Varuna, for example, who controls all waters in all ways, and is hence most important. These might be called the second crop of Vedic gods. It is the third crop that still is most prominent, but the second crop has by no means faded into the obscurity of Dyaus Pitar, and his wife, Prithvi.

By analogy with Greek myth, we might say that Dyaus Pitar is equivalent to Chronos or Saturn; that Zeus and Hera are equivalent in historical development, importance, and rank, to Varuna, Indra, and the gods of that level; but that the popular Gods of India; Siva, Brahma, and Vishnu, with their consorts, are on the third generation level of Apollo, Athene, Arès, and the rest.

When the ideologists of 19th century Europe first discovered and translated the *Vedas*, they developed a number of seemingly conflicting theories about their original meaning, and in particular of the meaning of the devas. One theory was that they might be co-ordinated with astrology, so that each deva was correspondent to the sun, the moon, the planets, and the fixed stars. Indra, for instance, was the planet Jupiter, which is indeed his symbol. There is much truth in this theory, and modern astrological calendars portray the devas in this manner. It is useful for the casting of horoscopes.

Another theory was that the devas might be ascribed to a meteorological source, for they severally control thunderstorms, earthquakes, drouth, glaciation, sand storms, starvation, and the skies. In this aspect Indra is the storm god, in the manner of the Nordic Donar or Thor. His thunderbolt is a bundle of arrows, with which he pierces the clouds to produce rain. This is certainly one aspect of Indra. As such, he is frequently called Indra Vrtrahan, from

### PLATE THREE

A typical pilgrim's map of Allahabad, the holy place at which the two main rivers of Northern India, the Ganga and the Yamuna, meet. To take a bath at this sacred place where the waters of the two rivers join is the desire of every Hindu, who also hopes that his ashes, or a part of them, may be thrown into the rivers here after cremation.

The map of the city in the lower section is readily understood even by illiterates. The upper section shows the well-known pictures of the major Vedic and Post-Vedic deities worshipped at the various temples and holy sites of Allahabad.

# ग्रसली नकशा श्री प्रयागवटका पूरा





han, the slayer, and vrtra, the dragon or demon that he slays with his thunderbolt.

If we had no more than the *Vedas* we would not know any guise of Indra but this one. Fortunately many of the myths that are not preserved in these brief sacrificial hymns have been saved by oral tradition, by the story tellers, and can be found set down in texts later than the *Vedas*, though they go by the name of the *Old Texts*, or *Puranas*. These throw much light on the tales told in the *Rig-Veda*. Nor should we be surprised that the light so shed is an interpretive light, for textual criticism is implicit in any oral tradition:

Thus, in the *Rig-Veda*, we learn of Indra that:

He slew the dragon, then disclosed the waters, and cleft the channels of the mountain torrents.

He slew the dragon lying on the mountain: his heavenly bolt of thunder Tvashtar fashioned.

Like lowing kine in rapid flow descending the waters glided downward to the ocean.

Impetuous as a bull, he chose the Soma, and in three sacred beakers drank the juices.

The Bounteous One grasped the thunder for his weapon, and smote to death this firstborn of the dragons.

When, Indra, thou hadst slain the dragons' firstborn, and overcome the charms of the enchanters,

Then, giving life to sun and dawn and heaven, thou foundest not one foe to stand against thee.

Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vritra, worst of Vritras.

As trunks of trees, what time the axe hath felled them, low on the earth so lies the prostrate dragon.

He, like a mad weak warrior, challenged Indra, the great impetuous many-slaying hero.

He, brooking not the clashing of the weapons, crushed—Indra's foe—the shattered forts in falling.

Footless and handless still he challenged Indra, who smote him with his bolt between the shoulders.

Emasculate yet claiming manly vigor, thus Vritra lay with scattered limbs dissevered.



There as he lies like a bank-bursting river, the waters taking courage flow above him.

The dragon lies beneath the feet of torrents which Vritra with his greatness had encompassed.

Then humbled was the strength of Vritra's mother: Indra hath cast his deadly bolt against her.

The mother was above, the son was under, and like a cow beside her calf lay Danu.

Rolled in the midst of never-ceasing currents flowing without a rest for ever onward,

The waters bear off Vritra's nameless body: the foe of Indra sank to during darkness.

Guarded by Ahi stood the thralls of Dasas, the waters stayed like kine held by the robber.

But he, when he had smitten Vritra, opened the cave wherein the floods had been imprisoned.

A horse's tail wast thou when he, O Indra, smote on thy bolt; thou, god without an equal,

Thou hast won back the kine, hast won the Soma; thou hast let loose to flow the seven rivers.

Nothing availed him lightning, nothing thunder, hailstorm or mist which he had spread around him:

When Indra and the dragon strove in battle, Maghavan gained the victory for ever.

Whom sawest thou to avenge the dragon, Indra, that fear possessed thy heart when thou hadst slain him;

That, like a hawk affrighted through the regions, thou crossedst nine-and-ninety flowing rivers?

Indra is king of all that moves and moves not of creatures tame and horned, the thunder-wielder.

Over all living men he rules as sovran, containing all as spokes within the felly.<sup>4</sup>

This is a typical dragon-slaying myth, but it does not leave us much the wiser, until we learn from the *Puranas* that the Vrtra slain by Indra was a Brahmin, that is a priest of the highest order, an ascetic, in other words, a Yogi. Thus Vrtra was not only a

<sup>4</sup> Ralph T. H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rig-Veda* (Benares: E. J. Lazarus and Co.).

dragon, but had derived his demonic energy from ascetic exercises. But since he used his ascetic powers to withhold the power of life, rather than to increase it, Indra slew him in order to release the power of life. In other words, by destroying extreme ascetic tendencies Indra once more liberated the sperm of life, which implies that ascetic tendencies are against the natural order of nature. Dr. Jung and his followers, notably Heinrich Zimmer, interpret the legend and its gloss in this way. The Freudian school would have you believe that the asceticism of Vrtra is the result of an anal erotic infantile tendency. The Indians carry the matter somewhat further.

They perceive that, whatever good might come of his act, Indra, in slaying Vrtra, has committed murder. Despite his being King of the Gods, he must atone for his guilt. The other gods decide that his guilt should be distributed, however; a third to himself, a third to the grass that is being trodden about and disregarded by everybody, and a third upon the shoulders of women, insofar as all three had an interest in the slaying of Vrtra, whose death they desired. So women, in desiring the death of the ascetic principle so that they may once more become fertile, share with Indra the eternal burden of his guilt.

A reflection of this gloss upon a half-forgotten legend may be found in the story of the Nordic Siegfried who slew Fafnir, the dragon who hoarded gold in a cave. We need only remember that Jupiter fertilized Danae by means of a golden shower, and that during the Renaissance this shower was painted as a shower of money, to realize the parallelism between the two legends. Inasmuch as gold, too, has a certain fertilizing power in the world of finance, you may apply these basic myths to any secondary phenomena you please with equal validity. In such a sense they are universal parables.

The third theory of the origin of the Vedic gods is the sociological or Euhemeristic theory. Such a theory would have us believe that all divinities of all religions were originally exceptional men who had been elevated by their descendants to the status of heroes and divine beings, and who were then worshipped as such. We can see this taking place as an historic process in the elevation of the Christian saints, particularly the extra-canonical ones, such as Guignefort. But the Euhemeristic theory is of limited validity. Such elevation is only

possible *a posteriori*, within the framework of an already existent religious machinery. After all, we must have some concept of divinity before we can raise anyone to the status of the divine. Still, within its limited range, the sociological theory of the origin of the Vedic gods is correct. Indra is indeed a real King of the Gods, who led his people into battle against the indigenous inhabitants of India, both civilized and aboriginal. He is therefore the God who leads his people to victory. The other Gods have similar tribal functions.

As a fourth theory, there is the explanation that the Vedic gods had their origin in the biological functions of the body, in its skin, glands, and major organs. For this theory much evidence can also be advanced. In India cosmogony has conceived a world that is neither a sphere, as in Greek tradition, nor an egg that will someday hatch, as in such beliefs as gnosticism, Mithraism, and Hellenism. Neither, for that matter, is it the hyperbolic structure envisioned by modern nuclear physics. It is conceived as having the shape of a man, or, particularly in the Jain tradition, of a woman. In Jaina iconography the world is pictured as a woman standing with her arms raised, so that we may see on every part of her body the deva who reigns over that part of the body. The world is a macrocosm containing all the devas in its various organs. Man, as a microcosm of the world, is also the abode of the devas. In this view Indra is the pituitary gland, which governs so many of our bodily functions. The theory can be illustrated from ancient as well as modern sources.

Finally, there is also the psychological theory of the origin of the Vedic devas. It has been put forward by Indologists working with psychoanalytic methods, and it is in line with Dr. Jung's attempt to combine the dreams of his patients with the legends and myths of the ancient Orient, to the elucidation of both. Such an interpretation is particularly associated with the work of Heinrich Zimmer.

The theory has shed much light upon the somewhat vague outlines of the legends of India. In this aspect, Indra is the release power that prevents our tendency to hoard or hold back, and to prefer security to unknown activity.

The latter theory has both applicability and validity, but when we ask ourselves which of the theories is the true one, we are conditioned by the habit of western thought that demands an absolute

and so feels that if there are many theories, only one of them can be true. This is not the habit of Oriental thought, nor, for that matter, in the practical realm, is it the habit of Man's mind. The Orient accepts reality in all its diversity. The Occident, from time immemorial, has escaped from the problems of the world of "is" into the safer, if more constricted, world of "should."

It is one of the many messages of Dr. Jung that in the mythological consciousness many answers may be right at the same time; that no great myth has only one meaning, for myths are levers, not dead weights. The myth and the dream have this in common: that they can be interpreted in many ways.

All these theories of Vedic origin have something to recommend them. Together they explain much, individually only a little. Nothing in the world is static. It is in a state of flux. It changes. It evolves and devolves. The numinous, the fire behind the fire, is constant; but the means whereby we perceive its flickering reflection do constantly change. As the emphasis of Man's interest shifts, so will the nature of those things in terms of which he perceives the numinous. He is not only at the mercy of his myths: his myths are also to a certain extent at the mercy of him. The great myths are those which survive to retain their vitality, and they survive only if they are parables capable of being used to interpret a vast diversity of material and of interest. Therefore the great myths all deal with essential matters, with the basic principles that dominate both Man and the mind of Man, no matter how literally these essential matters may be clothed in words. The legend of Indra and Vrtra happens to be a statement of one such complex of opposing forces in the mind of Man. As such it can apply to any field of endeavor in which a like opposition exists. A great myth is a means not so much of ultimately explaining, as of ordering experience, and as such it is one of the tools of the subconscious, as the components of any logical system are the tools of the conscious, or rational, mind. Myths thus enable us to deal with non-rational experience in an orderly manner.

As time went on some of the older Vedic devas lost their importance and went almost unmentioned precisely because they did not possess this requisite mythic adaptability, and were therefore no longer useful. By observing this dropping out we can follow the development of Indian consciousness.

In the later stages of development in the Vedic hymns two deities become particularly important. These are Agni and Soma. Agni is the firegod; Soma the spirit of the intoxicating drink upon which the Aryans so heavily relied.

When we count the number of Vedic hymns addressed to Agni, we see that he was originally second in importance only to Indra. This prominence resulted from the importance of fire to a primitive people. By the time the *Puranas* were written, life had become more settled, and he therefore dwindles in stature to the rank of a secondary deity.

The parentage of Agni is somewhat unclear, for his birth is attributed to whatever God was considered prime at the time of the attribution. Thus his begetting is laid to the door, alternately, of Dyaus Pitar, Brahma, and Mankind.

In the *Rig-Veda* Agni is the:

Earliest priest whom all the gods accepted, and chose him, and anointed him with butter,  
He swiftly made all things that fly, stand, travel, all that hath motion,  
Agni Jatavedas.

Because thou, Agni Jatavedas, stoodest at the world's head with thy refulgent splendor,  
We sent thee forth with hymns and songs and praises: thou filledst heaven and earth, God meet for worship.

Head of the world is Agni in the night-time; then, as the sun, at morn springs up and rises.  
Then to his task goes the prompt priest foreknowing the wondrous power of gods who must be honored.

Lovely is he who, kindled in his greatness, hath shone forth, seated in the heavens, refulgent.  
With resonant hymns all gods who guard our bodies have offered up oblation in this Agni.

First the gods brought the hymnal into being; then they engendered Agni, then oblation.  
He was their sacrifice that guards our bodies; him the heavens know, the earth, the waters know him.

He, Agni, whom the gods have generated, in whom they offered up all worlds and creatures,  
He with his bright glow heated earth and heaven, urging himself right onward in his grandeur.

Then by the laud the gods engendered Agni in heaven, who fills both worlds through strength and vigor.

They made him to appear in threefold essence; he ripens plants of every form and nature.<sup>5</sup>

And in another hymn we learn that:

"He is the priest, first of all: behold him. Mid mortal men he is the light immortal.

Here was he born, firm-seated in his station, immortal, ever waxing in his body.

A firm light hath been set for men to look on: among all things that fly the mind is swiftest.

All gods of one accord, with one intention, move unobstructed to a single purpose.<sup>6</sup>

Agni was originally the fire that carried the essence of Man's sacrifice up to the devas for their nourishment, so that they might become strong enough to intercede for Man on earth. Thus, in the *Satapatha-Brahmana*, we learn that:

Verily, this brick-built-fire-altar is this terrestrial world: the waters of the encircling ocean are its circle of enclosing-stones; the men its Yajush-mati bricks; the cattle its Sudadohas; the plants and trees its earth-fillings between the layers of bricks, its oblations and fire-logs; Agni, the terrestrial fire, its space-filling brick;—thus this comes to make up the whole Agni; and the whole Agni comes to be the space-filler; and, verily, whosoever knows this, thus comes to be that whole Agni who is the space-filler.<sup>7</sup>

As such fire, Agni is a typical messenger god, a go-between between Heaven and Earth, devas and man. Vedic sacrifice consisted of burnt offerings. The animal was butchered and its entrails read for oracles. Then it was roasted, and the smoke rose to the sky. To primitive thought, that smoke contained the essence of the animal. The priests might eat the remainder, or corporeal part of the sacrifice; but the essential part had gone up in smoke to the gods. A sacrificial meal is not a sacrifice in the modern meaning of that term, as the giving away of something that you would rather keep to yourself. On the contrary, and this also applies to the Sacrament at a Catholic mass, it implies the sanctification of a certain activity that has for the moment been activated by the light of the Being of

<sup>5</sup> Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rig-Veda*, Vol. II, p. 513.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 564.

<sup>7</sup> Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLIII, p. 381.



Being. You are, by such sacrifice, grasping at the Miracle of Being through the sacrifice, and it is that which is the sacrament and the sacrifice, not the ritual eating or burning of the animal itself. The corporeal sacrifice is merely the empty husk, the remainder of the essential nature of the thing sacrificed. That essential nature has gone to feed the Gods in the sky, by means of the smoke aroused by its burning. So, too, the importance in Hindu ritual of flowers, whose scent or smell belongs properly to the gods, but whose physical entity may be discarded without impiety, for it is only the essence that is consecrated.

As a religious idea, this practice is virtually universal. In the Babylonian *Gilgamesh* epic one may read of Utna-Pistim, the Babylonian equivalent of Noah. He builds an ark at the behest of the fish god, and stays alive with his animals throughout the forty days of the deluge. His first act on disembarking is to offer a sacrifice. And the gods, who have been starving for forty days in the absence of any such offering, gather over the smoke as flies assemble over a kitchen oven, eager for nourishment.\*

Agni, the fire, facilitates the sacrifice by wafting upwards the essential energy of the thing sacrificed. He is the means by which things are converted into energy. Later interpretation, as we have seen in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, abstracted his specific function into a general principle.

Soma is also an element connected with sacrifice. The god Indra can consume, we are told, barrels of soma, which in its historic origins was probably some form of fermented cactus juice by means of which the ancient Aryans rendered themselves mundanely or inspiringly drunk. Sacred drunkenness is to be found in almost all religions except those of a Semitic origin, which tend to frown on it. Whatever soma was originally, and there are those who identify it not with the cactus, but with *asclepias acida Roxburghae*, it in any event was a milky fermented juice easily identifiable with semen and the generative principle. After consuming soma, Indra was filled with power, and did an ecstatic dance, being more able than ever to despatch his thunderbolt against some enemy. The Aryan warriors used the fluid for exactly the same purpose.

\* Percy Handcock, *Babylonian Flood Stories* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1921).



May I, the wise and devout, enjoy the delicious abundantly honored Soma food, which all Gods and mortals, pronouncing sweet, seek to obtain. Thou interest within, and, unimpaired, thou avertest the anger of the gods; Soma, enjoying the friendship of Indra, mayest thou bring us to wealth as a swift horse its burden.

We drink the Soma, may we become immortal; we have attained the light, we have known the gods; what now should the enemy do to us, or what, O immortal, should the aggrieved do to the mortal?

O Soma, drunk by us, be bliss to our hearts, as a father is indulgent to a son or a friend to a friend; O Soma, worthy of wide praise, do thou, wise one, extend our years that we may live.

May these glory-conferring protecting Soma-streams knit together my joints as cows draw together a chariot falling in pieces; may they keep us from a loosely-knit worship; may they deliver me from sickness.

Soma, kindle me like the fire ignited by attrition, brighten our eyes and make us rich; I praise thee now for exhilaration; come now, full of wealth, to nourish us.

May we partake of thee, effused, with a longing mind as men enjoy paternal wealth; King Soma, prolong our lives, as the sun the world-establishing days.

King Soma, bless us for our welfare; we worshippers are thine, do thou recognize it; the enemy goes strong and fierce, O Soma; give us not over to him as he desires.

O Soma, thou art the guardian of our bodies, thou dwellest in each limb as the beholder of men; though we impair thy rites, yet, divine one, bless us, thou who are possessed of most excellent food and good friends.

May I obtain a wholesome friend who, when quaffed, will not harm me, O lord of bay horses; I ask of Indra a long permanence for this Soma which has been placed within us.

May those irremovable sicknesses depart; let those strong pains which have made us tremble, be afraid; the mighty Soma has climbed into us,—we have attained that draught by which men prolong life.

That Soma which, drunk into our hearts, has entered, immortal, into us mortals,—to him, fathers, let us do worship with oblations; may we abide in his bliss and favor.

Soma, thou in conjunction with the fathers didst stretch out successively heaven and earth,—to thee let us do worship with oblations, may we be lords of wealth.

Guardian gods, speak favorably to us; let not dreams nor the censurer overpower us; may we be ever dear to Soma; possessed of brave offspring, may we utter our hymn.

Thou, Soma, givest us food from every side; thou art the bestower of heaven; enter us, beholder of men; O Soma, rejoicing with thy protecting powers, guard us from behind and before.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Rig-Veda Sanhita* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1888), pp. 93-96.

Elsewhere we learn that soma was greenish in hue, that it was mixed with milk, and that it was brought from Heaven by an eagle. No ritual, no offering of life-giving energy to the Gods, in a word, no sacrifice, could be satisfactory or complete unless the Gods gave energy in return. And this they do through soma. Energy is conceived to be a nourishing fluid, like or mixed with milk, like semen, the two being interchangeable in the primitive consciousness. In drinking soma, the source of energy of the Gods, Man comes close to the Gods, though he does so on a different level of consciousness. The soma consumed at sacrifice undergoes transubstantiation, just as does communal wine.

In the later development of the *Vedas*, Indra has disappeared to a higher and less potent realm. Agni and Soma, as embodiments both of the life-force offered up and the life-force received, have largely supplanted him, and are more frequently addressed, more highly considered, and more praised than any of the other gods. They were the ones then chiefly worshipped.

It is one of the tragic confusions of religious history that as a faith codifies, the vehicles by means of which Man communes with the Divine themselves supplant the Divine and become in themselves prime deities. They thus become more important than the Mystery or Miracle of Existence, the ultimate consideration of a religion that then drops out of the picture and is gradually forgotten. It is a further tragedy that in all religions founded by prophets and great seers devoted to the Miracle of Being, the prophets and seers themselves and despite themselves, even in their own lifetime, become the objects of worship, supplanting the higher truth in which they believed.

The next step after that in the evolution of a faith, occurs when the means of worship becomes more important than the thing worshipped. Each faith, in the course of time, becomes inevitably institutional. The temple, the monastery, and ritual, with their merely psychological effects upon the worshipper, triumph in the end, so that all sight of the Being of Being is lost.

There is a story of a strange group of people assembled around a man who was both an atheist and an agnostic; spiritual conditions excessively rare in India. He was a man who wanted to do away with all the corpus of religious practice that deteriorates the immediate realization of truth. He had attracted followers who made a practice of gathering around him every Sunday, while he

spoke to them of his principles. As time went on the followers would gather to await the appearance of the master, for they found it pleasant to assemble and sing songs before he arrived. Finally a building was erected to shelter the followers, and the agnostic had a room there. After his death it became the practice of his followers to bow before his empty room before entering the hall. A picture of him was put in a gold frame on a special table; and children placed flowers and incense on the table. In a few years a religion had grown about a man who in his lifetime had believed in none, and who, moreover, had told his followers that such practices were in themselves bad. It is a little parable of the evolution of any creed. When we come to consider the various ramifications of the historic development of Buddhism we shall see how exact a parable it is.

In the course of time Agni and Soma supplanted Indra in importance, and the ritual surrounding these two deities came to have a greater significance than did any understanding of their symbolic nature. It is as though, in the history of a religion, we drew away from the numinous as a ship does from the shore. We shall later see that it is in the decadence of a religion, when we are beached on the farther shore, that we once more become aware of the numinous as the goal of all faith. A perception of the numinous is the initial impulse of a religion. But it is only when the codified doctrine of that faith ripples out into meaninglessness that the numinous once more becomes important. And, at that end of the process, we glimpse it clearly for a moment only, for it is soon obscured by the solidifying vapors of a new evolving faith.

As a religion develops, not only does the God who personifies the *numen* recede, but the secondary deities change their character. So it is with the *Vedas*. Of all the *devas* mentioned there, only three emerge to survive into the historical period in a condition of prime importance. Thus we can observe the emergence of Vishnu, Siva, and Brahma as an all-embracing triad. At a still later date, these three represent three aspects of being, but are themselves contained in Being itself, which is represented by the higher character of Brahma, whose functions come to overlap those of the primordial Indra. A considerable body of legend has grown up around these three deities, some of it as old as the *Vedas* themselves, but trans-

mitted and altered by oral tradition and not set down until much later, in the *Puranas*. If we are to define the nature of these three, we can best do so by dealing with one or two of the basic legends set down in the *Puranas*.

Of the three *devas*, Vishnu is known and worshipped not so much for his own sake, as for his various avatars, or incarnations. The literal meaning of the word avatar is descent; and Vishnu was the God who descended from Heaven to take some mundane shape, that of an animal, a hero, or a prophet, in order to save the imperiled existence of created things. The avatars of Vishnu are numerous, but ten are of prime importance. Of these ten, the first five, which are animal or in the shape of a dwarf, are said to have taken place in worlds other than ours. The next four were corporeal, and include Krishna and the Buddha. The last is yet to come, and will signal the end of the world. By means of the avatars of Vishnu, it was possible to organize much conflicting primitive myth, and also to incorporate into Hinduism such prophets as the Buddha, who founded a religion of his own, and the Gods of Christianity and of Mohammedanism.

Thus Christian missionaries found it possible to facilitate the spread of their own faith in India by representing Jesus Christ as such an avatar, since to the Hindu there is no limit to the possible avatars of Vishnu. Indeed, the Italian Jesuit nobleman, de Nobili, was rebuked for doing just that as long ago as the 17th century; his syncretism was so successful, and the Hindus absorbed it so easily into their own body of belief, that it became necessary for Pope Gregory XV, in 1623, to decree that Brahmins converted to Catholicism might continue to wear their sacred cords and caste marks, if these had been blessed by a Catholic priest. The situation was an unusual one, for the Christian missionary desires to have his faith recognized as the only faith; whereas to the Hindu the gods of all other faiths are merely some of the numerous avatars through which Vishnu has passed thus far.

Vishnu is the governing lord of the material world, and in himself he is both space and matter. One of the chief legends about him deals with his ambition to become prime Lord of the Universe. To his fellow *devas* it seemed an overweening ambition: this attitude, incidentally, gives us an insight into his historical evolution,

and we see that originally he must have been of secondary importance. The other devas refused his request.

Vishnu thereupon turned himself into a small dwarf, and as such he so succeeded in entertaining the other devas at a banquet that they offered him one favor. Indeed, it would have been immoral of them not to have done so, for to the Hindu mind it is in the nature of things to pay for any good that you may have received, otherwise you do damage to your karma, or destiny.

In his shape as a dwarf, Vishnu asked for possession of as much space as he could cover with three steps. The other devas thought this the droll joke of an antic dwarf and granted his wish. Vishnu then assumed his true and monumental shape. One enormous step he placed in the firmament, so that all the heavens were his and bore the imprint of his foot. The theme is often represented in Hindu sculpture and painting. With his second step he covered the earth which, as is common to primitive cosmogony, was conceived to be a flat surface rather than a sphere. And since he covered all earthly things with his foot, the imprint of his footprints is shown in many holy places in India, evidence that all material creation is under the sway of Vishnu. Therefore, to the Hindu, the world about him is not a negative or demonic place, but in all its aspects bears the imprint of the divine.

Had he taken a third step, Vishnu might have claimed the underworld and all its contents, but he did not take a third step, for it is the philosophy of the East that it is unwise to claim too much. One must leave a little of one's luck unexploited, in order not to crowd it.

It is a philosophy with very practical manifestations, in the history of Hinduism and Buddhism alike. For example, the Buddhist Korean when in battle always left one road open for the escape of the enemy, since to close him off completely would be to provoke despairing retaliatory acts.

So for his third step Vishnu did not intrude upon any realm, but instead danced between earth and Heaven, thus creating the rhythm of the world. The underworld, which might have been his, he left to other powers who, in the course of historical development, have become less important than the triad and half forgotten. They rule the subconscious spheres.

Such is the legendary explanation both of the power and of the

worship of Vishnu, a worship extremely widespread in India today. Vishnu is the spirit of the knowable and visible world, and as such a benevolent and cheerful God. His worship is therefore the process of embracing all that is inherently and basically divine, an attitude that finds the Being of Being present in all things.

Siva is the second member of the Trinity, who, with his consort, Durga or Parvati—for each of the triad has a female counterpart—is also universally worshipped in India. Originally Siva was a primitive God of destruction, and as such was mistakenly identified with the Devil by Christian missionaries. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Devil is a negative force, and this is precisely what Siva, in his later Vedic development, is not. To the Hindu, destruction is as essential to the life process as creation, not something opposed to the good, but merely the obverse of the same coin. The three principal devas are equally important and in no sense partake of the nature of evil, which is assigned to the asuras, or demons of the underworld.

The third member of the triad is Brahma, the deva who inhales and exhales all being. As he exhales he repeats the mantras, or holy formulas, the ancient ritual names of all created things that he alone retains in his memory. Thus he has the secondary name of Brahma Paramahansa, hansa referring to the respiratory function. When he inhales, the world vanishes into him. There results the night of Brahma. When he awakes he exhales the world once more, reproducing it exactly by remembering and uttering the names of all those things present in the previous world. These names are to be found in the sacred Sanskrit texts, and he utters them just as the priest would utter them.

For instance, Brahma recalls that the name that the world bore in its previous existence was loka, a word related to our English word look. In exhaling the word loka he exhales everything that may be seen with the eye. When he exhales the word purusha, or man, then he exhales man. In brief, all existence as we know it is no more than a word spoken by the Supreme Being.

This concept is an important one, if we are to understand Hindu thought. According to Christianity, God created the world only once, and therefore it is a finite world. But Brahma did not create the world in this material and absolute sense. He breathed it in and out almost involuntarily. This breathing is called pranayama, and is



one of the disciplines of the Yogi, who tries to comprehend the Divine by reproducing the process in himself, and who attempts to abolish the ego by so doing.

The world that Brahma exhales is Vishnu, the sustainer of all existence. Of the three, Siva is the deva who takes used-up things away, in order that Brahma may breathe them forth again. If Siva did not destroy the world, it would be lifeless, for then Brahma would cease to breathe. Siva is the inhalation of Brahma, in other words. Thus the world is the respiration of the Supreme Being, and therefore dies and is reborn not merely at the end of a millennium, but daily, hourly, and momentarily. In such a view it is necessary to die in order to be born, and if we do not die, then assuredly we will not be reborn, and therefore will cease to be. So Siva is not a gruesome God, nor does he have the negative moral connotations of the Christian Devil. He is on the contrary the alternate links in an endless chain of being. True, the primitive prototype of Siva did have negative characteristics. In his origins he was called Rudra, the red God, because in the Aryan pastoral period it was he who brought the sandstorm that spread a red dust of pestilence, illness, and death over the world. Thus Emerson:

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.<sup>10</sup>

For even as Rudra, Siva had the double attribute of welcoming that which was to be, as well as destroying that which was.

Among the Saivas, those Hindus who worship Siva rather than Vishnu, it is part of the ritual that, every morning after worship of Puja, they dip three fingers into the ashes used for that worship and draw three horizontal lines across their foreheads, to symbolize Siva; whereas the Vaishnavas, or followers of Vishnu, draw in red and yellow a mark that resembles an open bowl receiving the power from above.

Neither sect believes that it or the other worships either a true or a false God, for the most essential element of Hinduism is its utmost tolerance. Nor can Vaishnavas and Saivas be separated out as easily

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<sup>10</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Poems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1884), p. 170.

as we can distinguish between Protestants and Catholics. Hinduism does not deal in such oppositions. There is scarcely a temple of Vishnu that does not contain a representation of Siva in one of its side chapels, usually in the form of a lingam, or phallic symbol of creativeness. There are few temples to Siva that does not likewise contain an image of Krishna or one of the other avatars of Vishnu. The two Gods are inseparable, for we might say that they represent the one the tremendum, the other the fascinosa, of the numinous; the inhalation and exhalation of Brahma.

In many ways, and at many times, Siva has been the most highly regarded of the three supreme devas. For an explanation we may turn to the legend of the churning of the sea of milk.

At one time the devas of Heaven were distressed because the asuras, or night demons, obscured the light of Heaven in an attempt to seize world power for themselves. They swarmed up out of the underworld for this purpose in an overwhelming horde. Afraid that they might perish in the ensuing struggle, the devas attempted to obtain the juice of immortality, or amṛta, a word etymologically related to the Greek ambrosia. To us ambrosia is something delectable. To the Hindus amṛta meant deathlessness.

Amṛta was difficult to obtain. Since the Aryans were a herding people, they conceived that it should be churned, like butter, from the primordial sea of milk in which the world swims. Meru, the world in the shape of a mountain, offered itself to the devas as a churning stick, for the world mountain was of such a shape that, if it were reversed, it could be used for this purpose. Ananta, the world snake, served as the string that, wrapped round the stick, could be used to agitate it if pulled rapidly from opposite sides. In time this would set up enough friction to produce the butter of immortality.

The devas accepted this offer, but were not strong enough to perform the task alone. They therefore approached the very demons they were fighting, against whom they were to use the butter as protection, and asked them to agitate the other end of the world snake, who was serving as a churn string. The asuras, being proud, demanded to hold the head rather than the tail end of the snake. As the churning began, so many of the good things of creation were flung up from the sea of milk that the world snake, who swallowed them, became ill. It began to vomit, and its poison rendered the asuras incapable of further harm. But it also spread out until it dark-

ened the whole world and endangered the devas themselves. In their distress, Brahma, Vishnu, and Indra called upon the aid of Siva.

Siva was in meditation in a cave high in the Himalayas. In his character as he who has supreme power over present, past, and future, and who is thus the greatest of all yogis, he was inaccessible. The devas made a solemn pilgrimage to find him and to beg him for help. Siva, realizing their distress, stepped down to the shore of the sea of milk, reached out his left hand, and with it scooped up all the poison and swallowed it. Even he could not digest so powerful a negative poison as had been produced by so much positive churning. The poison stuck in his throat, and for this reason, he is, in the guise of Siva Nilakantha, or Siva the God with the blue-black neck, always depicted with a blue-black neck ring and a large Adam's apple.

However, the poison was nullified, and the devas were free of it. This legend, if you like, provides us with a parable of the psycho-analytic process in which, though all the negative qualities of the human soul cannot be destroyed, they can be shelved somewhere where they will be unable to do further harm.

By swallowing the poison, Siva became the savior of the Gods, the churning of amrta could proceed, and the devas, procuring it, were strengthened against any future struggles with the asuras.

Let us show the interrelationships among the three most important devas by still another legend.

There was once a wager among the devas as to which of them would be considered the most powerful. Such wagers in India are solved by sending the bettors forth one by one, to see whose absence is the most felt, he being the winner. It is an inversion of the pragmatic test.

Accordingly, in this wager the organs of the body made a bet as to which of the senses, either of the individual body or of the world body, was essential to that body. One by one the senses departed, and the body survived very well without its ears, its eyes, its sense of smell, and even without its power to think. But when the breath went out of it, all the other functions collapsed and it died. Brahma, then, might be seen the most important of the Gods. But the nature of his importance is further elucidated in still another tale.

When Brahma and Vishnu wagered as to which of them was the more important, they decided that each would walk through the

realms of the other, to see if everything one owned was also present in the world of the other. Vishnu, who was space and existence in all its parts, entered into the realm of Brahma, that is, into the realm of the spirit and of thought. We might say, in our own world-view, that he entered into the cosmos that Spinoza predicted, when he evolved the theory that the substantia that is God but cannot be expressed or glimpsed *by* Man, expresses itself to Man in terms of space and consciousness, of extensio and cogitatio, which are parallel to each other and the only aspects of the Divine that we can perceive. Or we might say that whatever can be found in space can be thought about in the consciousness and so given a name; and that whatever can be thought about or named therefore has an existence in space.

This was the world Vishnu entered in entering the body of Brahma. In terms of science, we might say that he endeavored to discover if spirit was not after all an extension of matter. Vishnu found everything of himself in the body of Brahma. Even his own search for something beyond himself he found represented as a possibility in the mind of Brahma. As far as Vishnu, the god of the sensorily perceptible, was concerned, both Gods were therefore equal. He then left the body of Brahma.

But when Brahma entered the body of Vishnu, who lay asleep on Ananta, the world snake, the result was somewhat different. Brahma, the source of all life, could not conceive of anything without finding it immediately present in the body of Vishnu, who is the embodiment of all things that have been conceived. Even the thoughts of Brahma that were beyond the boundaries of thought were reflected in Vishnu as soon as Brahma conceived them. It thus seemed to Brahma that the matter was undecided, and he attempted to leave the body of Vishnu. He found that he could not do so, for Vishnu had closed the eight gates of his body, not wishing to lose the source of his being that he for the moment contained. Brahma thus became a prisoner of the realm of matter, by which we might at first judge that the material can imprison the spiritual. But Brahma drilled a new opening in the body of Vishnu, the navel; a new opening, for the Gods, not being born of the womb, had none, just as Adam and Eve had none.

Brahma took the form of a water lily growing on top of the umbilical cord. When the lily unfolded, Brahma was discovered sit-

ting in the middle of the bloom, in the guise of a reborn baby with a crown on his head. In other words Brahma, the spirit, escapes from Vishnu, matter, by being reborn. And so it is with Man. If the story has a moral, it is precisely this: that the spirit can escape its prison of matter only by being reborn.

So, when we examine both the *Vedas* and the corpus of secondary literature that grew up around them, we find not only the disintegration of various deities and the growth to importance of others, but also an increasing tendency to interpret these anthropomorphic legends in abstract terms.

We also find that the Maha Rsis, or great prophets and singers, tended to concentrate on the triad of Vishnu, Siva and Brahma, for if all being derived from these three, then the lesser devas, who also derived from them, were of little importance, once these three had been placated, understood, and dealt with. But all the devas, even these three, are conceived to work for a diety or power greater than any or all of them. Many names have been invented to deal with this power. For instance it was called the Instigator. This supreme power the Rsis sought in terms of a father of all creation who stands behind any creation we may conceive of; that is to say, a Being of Being of which any God we may know is only a shadow. This ultimate God is called Praja Pati, or father of creation. If you can come to grips with Him, then you have come to grips with all his sons, grandsons, and descendants, including the present Gods. But the process ravel backwards, until finally you arrive at the mana, which in origin was the power that the liquid consciousness of primitive Man could not identify, but saw to be the essential force of things. In later theory mana becomes the inherent Being of Being, the instigator of everything we can even conceive of, including the instigator of whom we conceive. In Sanskrit this ultimate is called tat, a word that corresponds to our word that, and is the subject of *Rig-Veda* X, 129:

Then was not not-existent nor existent; there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it.

What covered in, and where? and what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water?

Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal: no sign was there, the day's and night's divider.

That One Thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature: apart from it was nothing whatsoever.

Darkness there was: at first concealed in darkness this All was undiscriminated chaos.

All that existed then was void and formless: by the great power of warmth was born that unit.

Thereafter rose desire in the beginning, desire, the primal seed and germ of spirit.

Sages who searched with their heart's thought discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.

Transversely was their severing line extended: what was above it then, and what below it?

There were begetters, there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder.

Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?

The gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?

He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it or did not form it,

Whose eye controls this world in its highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows it not.<sup>11</sup>

This is an extremely sophisticated concept, and it is dedicated to the That, the power of all powers that resides beyond all powers we can know. The song is perhaps 4,000 years old, and today we find the idea no easier to state. We can only ask the question, as did the unknown Maha Rsi who wrote this selection. What, then, is beyond beyond? There is no language of Man that can deal with this problem, and even the non-linguistic, non-visual mind has difficulty in doing so, because it is not only beyond the mind of Man, but beyond any mind that Man can conceive.

The original Sanskrit of *Rig-Veda* X, 129, shows something of the linguistic problem involved. *Na sat na asat asit*, it begins. Not being, not not being was. By comparison with such a concept, the Gods are no more than a later creation. If we may venture to say so, even the concept of the Being of Being is a pale later creation.

<sup>11</sup> Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rig-Veda*, Vol. II, pp. 575-76.



This unknowable is a very real problem in Man's mind, for even science, which so to speak unravels a carpet into the unknowable for our safe transit across it, never reaches the end. For beyond the unknowable as we conceive it lies the unknowable that we cannot conceive, and even when we are able to conceive of that, there will always be an unknowable beyond. Thus the greater our knowledge becomes, the more apparent to us becomes the existence of something beyond knowledge. So, as we chase the Being of Being up the ladder of Man's ascent from ignorance, we find it no closer, but farther away than ever, because less capable of being conceived in terms of anything we may know, no matter how great our knowledge may become. The Being of Being is inconceivable, and it is the inconceivable that we worship, which survives any particular system of worship we may outgrow or disbelieve in; and the more sophisticated we become, the more inconceivable the inconceivable becomes. So at most we are left with the tremendum and the fascinosum. We have divided feelings. We have them over and over again, in all religions and at all times, but the statement of them in one period or another is curiously the same.

When we read this poem, we find, discounting the paranoiac worldview of the present, that we have nothing but that final picture in the Zen ox-herding cycle that depicts only an empty circle. We have the Hindu primordial sea of milk; and we have the abstract oppositions of *Rig-Veda* X, 129, which ends:

He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it,  
Whose eye controls this world in its highest heaven, he verily knows it,  
or perhaps he knows it not.<sup>12</sup>

This opposition is one of the ultimate insights of the entire history of religion, an insight formulated long ago, by the oldest of living religions. It is formulated but it can never be resolved. That it cannot be resolved is one reason for the vitality of the religious impulse in the history of Man. For beyond any answer there is always another question; and we are, after all, a curious race, symbolized in Hindu belief by Hanuman, the monkey-God.

<sup>12</sup> Griffith, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 575.

## 5. BRAHMANISM

WE ARE REMINDED IN *Rig-Veda* x, 129 OF THE FRENCH movement called *Dada*, which pursued the irrational and childish, had an interest in language on its pre-semantic or intuitive level, and whose writers proclaimed that all languages were bad because they had no identity with the things they sought to describe. The chief example they cited was the word "dog," *le chien*. *Chien* seemed to have more in common, as a sound, with the common head cold than with a dog. On the other hand they had difficulty in finding any better sound, and even the child's word bow-wow, though more direct, had its drawbacks. For the human throat cannot reproduce the barking of a dog; and bow-wow was only a pale approximation. The Dadaists preferred the word that babies who have not yet learned to talk use to call a dog, or, for that matter, anything else that comes within range; *dada*. According to the dictionary, by the way, a *dada* is a rocking horse or hobby. It was the hobby of the *dadaist* to claim that true *dada* language had only one word, *dada*, and that the word was in the indicative only. You had to point at the thing that was *dada* while you said *dada*. If you were an Australian native, you used a pointing stick when you pointed, while saying the magic imitative word, in order to cast spells. There is *dada* present in the *Rig-Veda*, in the hymn to creation quoted in the last chapter, where the *Maha Rsi* sings of:

That One Thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature: apart from it was nothing whatsoever.<sup>1</sup>

He is speaking of the *tat*, the ultimate Being of Being that can be pointed out, can be shown, but cannot be defined or denominated. Such definition is negation, for all definition, in limiting things, is

<sup>1</sup> Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rig-Veda*, Vol. II, p. 129.

negation. Only the finding and realizing of the tat is affirmation. At the most one can point and say dada, or, in this case, tat. When we have arrived at this philosophy of the unnameable, which is surer and truer than all nameable things, we are already in the midst of what has come to be called Vedanta philosophy, from Veda plus anta, the end of the *Vedas*, the outcome or quintessence of Vedic wisdom.

As a name, Vedanta philosophy is known to many in the western world, for the swamis, or priests of the Vedanta Society, have been active in propaganda, and there are nine places in the United States where Vedanta temples exist and about fifteen swamis who promulgate the doctrine. In addition to this, some of our most prominent writers, such as Huxley, Gerald Heard, and Isherwood, have been very active in the movement.

Vedanta is to the Hindu religion as Platonism, through the idealism of the Neo-Platonists, was to the evolution of the dogmas of the Christian religion. It is a system for the interpretation of holy, but sometimes somewhat primitive, writ.

Before we examine further the ideas of Vedanta, it is necessary to say more about the people, usually called Aryans, who brought the *Vedas* with them when they invaded India.

The Aryans, a collection of Indo-European tribes who swept down from the North, and who may have had their origin in the plains of central Asia, naturally brought their religious practices and Vedic hymns with them. They also brought the lucky mark, the swastika, by which they recognized each other. This mark, reversed, is only too well known to us as the symbol of the National Socialist State of a few years ago, and we associate it with racial discrimination as a result. Originally the term Aryan had nothing to do with racial purism, fancied or real.

It is true that the warlike shepherds and cattleherders who overran India by way of the Hindu Kush, the Indus Valley, and finally the valley of the Ganges, called themselves Aryans, but by this term they meant comrades, friends, or, briefly, we the people. It was only their denominative term for themselves, without connotations of superiority.

As the Aryans swarmed over India, they came into contact with the agricultural and settled Dravidians, or, to speak anthropologically, the pre-Dravidian tribes. It was an opposed group, with a

quite different material and mental culture, and the Aryans did not call the Dravidians Aryans because, after all, they were not. The concept of mankind, which is that all peoples share the quality of belonging to the same genus, had not been developed in those remote times. An Aryan could not say to a Dravidian, "You are a man as I am," for to the primitive mind mankind did not exist and each tribe was a totality with nothing in common with any other tribe. Besides, the differences between the Aryans and the Dravidians were obvious and marked. The Aryans were a hardy, nomadic, war-like tribe, Caucasian in appearance. The Dravidians were, on the whole, and still are, short, stocky, and swarthy. They had totally different religions and habits, and two different cultures. If inferior in arms and violence, the Dravidians quite probably had a culture much more settled and on a much higher level of development than had their invaders, which, of course, produced resentment, incomprehension, and uneasiness on both sides. The Aryans called the Dravidians by animal names, for that was the way the Dravidians named themselves. Today when we call a person a dog, or a cat we seek to belittle him. To the primitive mind, absorbed in totemism, the animal is superior to the man, in having more mana than a human being, and thus being a more powerful concentration point of the revelation of a power that threatens our existence at every moment. So to the primitive mind, to call a person by an animal name is to invest him with the superior power of that animal. Indians today still have that habit of thought; and the attitude survives among us in such similes as "a fox for cunning," or "strong as an ox," as well as in the heraldic and royal beasts of the College of Heralds.

The early divinities of most primitive religions are pictured as animals, or, to put it scientifically, the theriomorph stage of religion precedes the anthromorph. Thus the Dravidians called themselves the elephant, the snake, or the tiger people, and the Aryans accepted such designations as a matter of course. They could not well do otherwise, since the Dravidians carried with them into battle large banners with their totemistic beasts blazoned on them, just as did our medieval knights. Such scenes are recorded in the ancient Indian epics.

In time the invading Aryans settled in the fertile valleys of India and began to mix with the native population. At that period, probably hundreds of years after the initial invasion, for it takes time for

a herding people to convert themselves into an agrarian one, the Aryan leaders decreed that it would be better for them to keep apart from peoples who did not worship the same gods or have the same social and cultural complex as they did. So the term Aryan became a term not of discrimination, but of distinction. The Aryans, a smaller group, had conquered the pre-Dravidians, a larger group, and in ruling them constituted an aristocracy. Thus the term Aryan became a term of nobility, and the names of the conquered races became terms of inferiority or slavery. By the time of the Buddha, *circa* 500 B.C., it had evolved into a matter of moral, rather than physical, superiority and inferiority.

"Him," says the Buddha, "I do not call an Aryan who wears his hair matted on his head, who wears the string of initiation around his shoulders, and can trace his ancestors back for several generations; but him I call Aryan who can keep his word that he has given; be faithful to his associates; obedient to his masters." In short a term that had at first been generic was now moral.

During the 19th century European scholars discovered the incredible similarity between the ancient Indian Sanskrit language and those of what they called the Indo-European language group. Geographically speaking, India was the home of Sanskrit. But in Persia was to be found a similar language, that of the invaders called Iranian. The Greek, Latin, Gallic, Romanic and Germanic languages were also akin. It was a philological rather than an anthropological discovery. Only at the end of the 19th century did some specialists in race, such as Gobineau and Houston Steward Chamberlain, convert the philological theory into an anthropological one by claiming that all those who spoke related languages must therefore be racially related. To such related races they applied the term Aryan.

This was an anthropological error, as can be demonstrated by the example of such countries as America or Switzerland, where the racial stock has little or nothing to do with the language spoken. The great languages are carried by war, conquest, and commerce. These Indo-European languages and their common root were the *lingua franca* imposed by the dominant group, as Latin once was, French was for several centuries, and English is today. We do not for a moment believe that a Chinese who speaks English is an Anglo-Saxon. Nonetheless some such belief lies behind the notion of the super

race called Aryan that was put forward by Fascist states and individuals until recently. It is quite nonsensical.

Nineteenth-century European scholars also applied themselves in trying to discover the geographical origin of the Aryans. They sought piously for the original home of the Indo-European tribe. The first solution they propounded was that this origin was to be located in the Caucasus, for which reason the term Caucasian still survives. That solution is out of date, and the origin of the Aryans has been placed variously on the steppes of the Volga, in Siberia, at the shores of the Baltic, on the Hungarian plains, and even towards the North Pole, which in earlier times had a much warmer climate than it has now. The search for Aryan origins is futile, for every origin has another origin behind it. Nor can the Aryan invasion of India be conceived in such terms as we conceive an invasion. It took place roughly from 1500 to 800 B.C. In modern terms we might as well speak of the European invasion of the Americas, which was never undertaken as an invasion, and which, after four hundred and sixty-odd years is still going on. For that matter, there are those who date the Aryan invasion of India even earlier, from 2500 to 1200 B.C. It is impossible to be certain of Indian dates, and the matter is not too important.

What is important is that, as the Aryans slowly became settled in their new environment, a number of changes took place in their social and economic structure, and therefore in their philosophy. To say this is not to agree with the Marxian theory that economics solves the riddle of and is the root of all historical process. But still, such changes do influence the philosophical and religious vocabulary of thought and concept. Ideas and religions do not stand isolated from reality, like those amorphous blobs of wax in a dry desert depicted in the paintings of Yves Tanguy. On the contrary, they are deeply rooted in environment and social structure. For instance, no people who did not herd cattle could have conceived *amṛta* to be like butter. They would not have known what butter was, and the whole metaphor of churning would have been beyond them. The Aryans, in settling, converted from a shepherd to an agricultural economy, and their religious texts bear the stamp of the transition.

Anthropologists distinguish four chief types of human society: the nomad or collector; the shepherd; the agricultural; and the industrial. Each society, if it is not arrested, passes through all four



stages. The basic ideas of the society are changed by the change. Collector societies, being dependent upon a fortuitous food supply and thus suffering frequent periods of starvation, are apt to be small and mutually hostile to each other. Their life is the life of the moment only. Their life expectancy is short; and they have no concept of the future. For them to be twenty or thirty is to reach a vast age, and therefore their time concepts are extremely limited. Since they are the victims of nature, and have no understanding of the interrelations that exist among things, the notion of comparative value scales is relatively unknown to them.

A shepherd society, nomadic because it must follow its herds, is considerably better off. But because it is nomadic and its livelihood depends to a large extent upon vegetation and animal fertility, its concept of spatial relationships and generative functions is more developed than in a collector society, for these things have been observed in practice. Such a society also has some provision against the future, though not much, and thus a firmer grip upon the time sense. An animal is slaughtered when it has reached the right age, not at random, as in a collector society, as soon as it is sighted. Shepherd societies accumulate wealth and begin to recognize social distinctions. They live longer.

As a shepherd society becomes an agricultural one, the stage at which we first observe the Aryans, who took over the agricultural culture of the Indian natives, both its economy and its thinking undergo an enormous change. The culture extends and expands. Being settled, the Aryans could build fortresses and so protect themselves against their enemies. They hoarded their food supplies, which became regularized within certain limits, and they multiplied in number and had more time for reflection. Their life expectancy once more rose. From death at thirty, some might expect to live to be eighty, given proper care. This sudden change in life expectancy probably had much to do with the fact that Indian philosophy came to be distinctly a philosophy of old age, free of the fervor of youth. Youth and age have different preoccupations, as well as different energies. For one thing the immediacy of experience becomes less important, the contemplation of previous experience more so. In this contemplation one is able to strike the comparative merits of various things, and such an attitude becomes desirable and proper to the age of the contemplator.

So among the recently settled Aryans there arose the custom that the father, when old, should give over his interest in the affairs of life, his property and duties, to his oldest son, who would carry on. One has then the idea of continuity, and of separate function. The *Upanishads* contain a ceremonial for this transfer, which contains the statement that:

When a father who knows this departs this world, then he enters into his son together with his own spirits, with speech, mind, and breath. If there is anything done amiss by the father, of all that the son delivers him, and therefore he is called putra, son. By help of his son the father stands firm in this world. Then these divine immortal spirits, speech, mind, and breath, enter into him.<sup>2</sup>

The process finally congeals into something much like this:

The concept of individuality on Roman soil was retarded by the excessive degree to which the social idea was developed. The individual existed merely for the sake of the family and its derivatives, the clan and the State. At death he passed over into the "majority," and lost whatever little of individuality he had gained in life, by being absorbed into the mass of departed spirits; he was mortal and the family was immortal. On the other hand, the family had created the clan, and the clan the State, with the result that the clan soon fell into insignificance and lost its life on behalf of the creature of its own making, the State. Finally, in its turn the State, at least in the earlier phases of its history, was nothing but the magnified reflection of family life, with its king as the father of his people, etc.<sup>3</sup>

The development of social stratification, at any rate, is much the same, though the religious ideas are not. Thus, in the Old Testament, Isaac sends from his deathbed to have his first-born come to receive his father's message:

When they were grown up, Esau became a skillful hunter, and a husbandman: but Jacob a plain man dwelt in tents.

Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his hunting: and Rebecca loved Jacob.

And Jacob boiled pottage: to whom Esau, coming faint out of the field, said: Give me of this red pottage, for I am exceeding faint. For which reason his name was called Edom.

And Jacob said to him: Sell me thy first birthright.

He answered: Lo, I die, what will the first birthright avail me?

<sup>2</sup> Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXI, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Carter, *The Religion of Numa* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1906), p. 6.

Jacob said: Swear therefore to me. Esau swore to him, and sold his first birthright.

And so, taking bread and pottage of lentils, he ate, and drank, and went his way; making little account of having sold his first birthright.<sup>4</sup>

Summoned as his first born by the dying and half-blind Isaac, Jacob allowed his mother to put on his hands the little skins of kids, and went to Isaac:

And Jacob said: I am Esau thy firstborn: I have done as thou didst command me. Arise, sit, and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

And Isaac said: Come hither, that I may feel thee, my son, and may prove whether thou be my son Esau, or not.<sup>5</sup>

So Jacob receives the blessing of the first born by a trick; and when Esau learns of this and rushes to his father, his father can only say:

I have appointed him thy lord, and have made all his brethren his servants. I have established him with corn and wine, and after this, what shall I do more for thee, my son? <sup>6</sup>

He can do no more; but to us this custom does not make sense. We wonder why Isaac cannot distribute more than one blessing. Blessing in this case is an incorrect rendering of the Old Testament Hebrew word for soul. The soul is passed on to the son, and this can be done only once. It is more than a blessing that has been transmitted: it is the essence of Isaac's existence, which includes even his real property. Having done this, the old man may die in peace, for he has saved the family soul by passing it on to the next generation. His body will die at his death, but his spirit is safe in the body of his son.

We find the same attitude among the Aryan settlers. But as the Aryans became settled and their lifespan lengthened, they were faced with the problem of the old man who, having surrendered the family soul to his first born, long survived that ceremony, which deprived him of his functional place in society. Such a man is the prototype of the roving beggar of India, a figure considered to be holy precisely because he has fulfilled his function of passing on the fam-

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 25: 27-34.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 27: 19, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 27: 37.

ily soul. Until recently, on a sociological level, we had the same phenomenon in Europe, the spectacle of the old couple in a farm on the property, venerated by those whom they produced, but having surrendered to them both social duties and social privileges.

Such a situation existed in the Aryan agricultural complex, and it gave rise to the formation of associations of elderly men of the tribes. Today these organizations survive as ashrams, the monastic settlements into which they eventually evolved. In such associations, the *Upanishads*, or records of discussions and debate, had their source. It is the nature of old men in all ages, that when they meet they begin to gossip, progress to politics, and end by philosophizing. Their chief concern is the meaning and nature of life, for they have reached the age when, freed of social obligation, they may consider such problems at ease. They have also reached a sufficient age to be able to look down the perspectives of their own pasts in search of the truth they feel to be at the end of them, at their point of origin. Old men have always tended to become philosophers. As they look backward, equally they look forward. In the future their view is interrupted by death, their one terminal certainty. "With what shift and pains we come into the World, we remember not; but 'tis commonly found no easy matter to get out of it. Many have studied to exasperate the ways of Death, but fewer hours have been spent to soften that necessity," wrote Sir Thomas Browne in his *Christian Morals*.

In order to extend themselves, men try to look beyond death. They become preoccupied with the subject, whose inevitability and nature can be seen around them, and they try to overcome death. They seek amrta, which is not ambrosia in the vulgar sense of that word, but whose meaning can be grasped clearly when we recall that the Indo-European root "mr" is the source of such words as mors, mortuary, mortality, and, in short, death. The "a" is the universal Indo-European sign of the negative. Amrta means deathlessness, which one obtains by means of the elixir of life. On a vulgar, corporeal level such an elixir may be thought to be a fluid or magical substance. Or it may develop into a religion or a philosophy. In either event, deathlessness is emphatically not the same as immortality, though the two are often unfortunately confused. When we think of immortality we conjure up a pretty picture of the Elysian fields, and of a pleasant personal survival there. We are all

too apt to locate Heaven in some superior suburb of the mind. Heaven was made accessible to the individual by Christianity either as some future condition of the individual soul, or else, in the Christian folk mind, as a very concrete place. Later, popular Buddhism did much the same thing. But Heaven, in its verbal root, is only a word for that condition wherein the gods co-exist, or God has His being.

Deathlessness is another matter altogether. It is the essential that can be retained only by giving it up, or passing it on, so that, at least to the early Aryans, it inheres in the concept of the son. The next generation is the deathlessness of the present one; so that being is a continuity or chain, and nothing is ever lost. Each of the avatars of Vishnu dies, in order that Vishnu may take another avatar, and so not die himself.

As the sense of individual personality developed, the answer that deathlessness exists in the impersonal progression of the generations became less acceptable to the individuated old men, or philosophers, of the tribe. As their lifespan lengthened and they had more leisure to contemplate the problem of death, they became more dissatisfied with the personal dissolution implicit in any generational concept of deathlessness. They were no longer content to give over their personal power, for their personal power meant a great deal to them. Also they had the time and lifespan in which to consider the behavior of the offspring to whom they had yielded their power. Their conclusions were not edifying. So strong was their sense of individuality that they wished some personal survival, and sought some means of prolonging themselves.

They could not procure it, as did the devas when they churned the sea of milk. In the later stages of the Aryan invasion two answers to the problem of amrta were proposed. One was samsara, the doctrine of reincarnation; the other, the concept of the atman, or philosophy of the higher self or true persona.

Samsara, or reincarnation, or transmigration, is a concept to be found nowhere in the *Vedas*. Therefore the Aryans did not bring it to India when they came, and it appears in their literature with some suddenness, without any recorded history of development. Perhaps it was a bold suggestion that became terrifying to all those who thought about it, since the implications of samsara are far

from pleasant. Perhaps it was taken over from the conquered peoples. To be endlessly bound to an endless wheel, to be ground upon the road of life not once, or twice, or a thousand times, but repeatedly and forever, with all responsibility, fault, and error ceaselessly accumulating to one's discredit, is not a pleasant prospect.

Therefore we may say that though practically all religions embrace an effort to overcome personal death by finding eternal life, Hinduism, in realizing the implications of endless reincarnation, has on the contrary displayed a desperate effort to overcome the everlastingness of life, death, and rebirth, and to find some definite terminal point that would liberate the self from its endless imprisonment.

We find samsara symbolized in the great cart Jaggarnath, that ponderous slow-moving chariot of Siva, the Lord of death and life and the endless cycle of change, beneath whose heavily revolving wheels the hysterical devout flung themselves, in an attempt to escape from the evils of reincarnation and of karma, which is the soul's responsibility for its own actions.

The idea of reincarnation is not one congenial or natural to the Occidental mind, and occurs only in the cults of the West that have been tintured by Oriental thought, from the time of Pythagoras to the present. Yet there are some 350,000,000 people in India who take it for granted. A few westernized Hindus may make a joke of it, in the occidentalized cities of Bombay and New Delhi, but at bottom they are not free of it, any more than we in the West are ever entirely free of the doctrine of Original Sin, no matter how much we may claim to disbelieve it.

To us, the idea of samsara, which is a form of immortality, might seem a ticket to eternal license. It seems so because we have not pondered the matter. To the Aryan, post-Vedic mind, the idea was frightening as soon as it appeared. For an endless chain of life and death means not only an endless chain of lives, but also one of deaths. There is thus no end to the misery of endlessly drifting around the eternal wheel of samsara, for the more you cling to life, the more you die. When we in the western world think of the wheel of life, we are apt to think of a wheel seen sideways. But the Hindu who believes in samsara is bound to the rim. He comes up from unconsciousness, from the mangling roadbed that is death, crushed



beneath the relentless weight of being, only to see himself approaching that roadbed once more and inevitably.

An early comparison by which *samsara* was elucidated compared Man to the bat. It is still a widespread custom in India to thread short pieces of bamboo on a long string, and to suspend the string between your house and the nearest tree. Bats seldom fly for long. They quickly exhaust themselves and so come to roost. Flying forth at evening, they try to rest, when tired, on the strung bamboo tubes, can get no purchase, try again and again, and fall helplessly exhausted to the ground, whereupon men pluck them up and fry them in butter, as a delicacy. So too, with *samsara*; men try frantically to hold onto security and life, and the more they try to do so the more quickly they lose both. Indeed, the very effort to hold on prevents the enjoyment of existence, insofar as an effort to secure the future prevents us from enjoyment of the present. Thus we lose ourselves in irreality, so that in losing reality, we also lose life.

Such are the graphic horrors of *samsara*, and they are vividly depicted in Indian iconography by the symbol of the wheel, which is common alike to Hindu, Buddhist, and Tibetan Lamaistic systems of faith. The wheel of *samsara* has little changed with the course of time. It is held by a female demon with enormous teeth and nails. She personifies infatuation and bewilderment, and as such holds in her hands the various realms of existence through which it is possible for Man to drift.

In the center of the wheel are three animals, the rooster, the snake, and the pig, who represent wrath, jealousy, and stupidity, the chief forces whereby *samsara* is kept in motion. On the outer rim of the wheel is depicted the life of Man from conception to death. These symbols are incidental to the central part of the wheel, which depicts the entire universe of being. These six compartments show us the realm of heaven, with gold-throned *devas* sitting in the midst of glory; and the realm of hell, where tortured criminals are chopped to pieces, burned, and cooked. Between these two extremes lies everything we know; the faces of the nature spirits, the

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#### PLATE FOUR

The Japanese Buddhist version of the wheel of *samsara*; the heaven of the *devas*, which occupied the top section of the original Hindu cosmogram, is left out by Buddhists, as in this five section wheel.



stars, the divinities who preside over storms and other powers; the warlike heros who are intermediate between heaven and earth. Below, towards hell, are the wild animals who live by killing, and so eventually descend to hell. There is the realm, also, of the domesticated animals, who are long-suffering, but in living on vegetables, rather than carrion, may hope to rise to a higher state of being. And then there is the realm of Man. At the bottom of it are the slaves and the poor; one ascends through ministers, kings, and those in power, upward towards the ashrams of the saints and yogis, who are but one step from divinity.

Such is the nature of the wheel; and it is the nature of Man constantly to be driven about the wheel, seemingly at random, demoniacally flung now into one order of being and then into another. If his acts in this life have been evil, he will descend to a lower realm in his next reincarnation. If his acts have been good, he will ascend. But whether he is good or bad, the nature of his present incarnation will determine the nature of his next, no matter how good his behavior may be; and there is always the danger that he may accidentally do something that will imperil an improved reincarnation. Even the gods are at the mercy of samsara.

As soon as a man dies, he must instantly enter into his next incarnation. There is no escape from this renewal. Nor is samsara dictated by any higher being. It is merely phenomenological, so that Man has neither the consolation of Original Sin, which was his own fault; nor of being driven by the Eumenides of Greek tragedy, and so has not the dignity of suffering ill willy-nilly.

Of this instant reincarnation two examples are given in the *Upanishads*, that of the caterpillar and that of the actor upon the stage.

Just as the caterpillar, who has crept to the end of the leaf and reached the brim, turns many ways and searches for another foothold, and finds it only to repeat the process, so does the living substance, when it has reached the end of one incarnation, search for another and repeat its existence. The caterpillar is the jiva, or living self.

So an actress in a play, who has played the part of a queen worshipped by all and secure on her throne; when the play is over, rushes to her dressing room, discards her regal costume, dons another, and returns as a fisherwoman of the lowest class, speaking

another language, and far from being courted, is the butt of every-one. The actress remains the same. So does the jiva. But she and it have taken a different form. In this form she is different to the audience, and she is also different to herself. So each time one dies one reappears in another form, under a different name, in a different realm, not necessarily as Man, but as any of the forms of existence. Modern theosophy misunderstands Hindu doctrine in this aspect, in believing that once born as a Man, the jiva progresses upwards through superior realms of being. This is not true according to that doctrine. Samsara is random. You may become a mosquito, a whale, a devil, a god, a blade of grass. The idea is demonic and horrifying, for we of this world do not ask that life be different in nature, but only that it be better in kind. Samsara offers us only more years of living and of additional suffering.

To the young, in the vividness of youth, immortality may seem a blessing. To those who are older, it does not. They would prolong life, but there are few who would repeat it. Even western literature is crammed with the misfortunes of those who have been condemned to eternity, from Poe's story of M. Valdemar, who evaded death by means of a cataleptic trance, but experienced corruption; to the legend of the Flying Dutchman and of the Wandering Jew. The Flying Dutchman is condemned to eternal life, for he is not able to die. He roams the seven oceans of the world, and he will be released from his eternal wandering only if a woman shall be faithful to him for seven years, alike in his presence and his absence, which never happens. Finally he finds Sonya, who is faithful. It is therefore possible for him to die. Man desires indefinitely to live longer; but to live forever, forever to repeat what he has done before, without hope of change, is not a blessing:

How each one of us, once we saunter past  
the first redemptions of inconstant life  
repeat, repeat, repeat  
the same dead measure and the same dead beat;  
open identical doors on identical death  
and feel ashamed of everyone we meet.<sup>7</sup>

That is not pleasant. There must be some ultimate end. The soul desires it, not now, not as an immediate fact, but as an ultimate

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<sup>7</sup> David Stacton, *The Death of Bosolo*, an unpublished manuscript.

promise. We all need sleep, and the world of *samsara* is an insomniac one.

There is a story of a guru, or teacher, who walks along the seashore one evening with his student. The sun is descending, so that the chalk cliffs are lit with fire. The student admires the light and says to his teacher: "How beautiful the mountains look. I see that beyond there is a still bigger mountain. Tomorrow let us walk farther and see it."

He is lured on to see the beauty of it, but the guru refuses to continue and makes camp on the seashore, saying, "Do you know what those mountains are that you so admire in the golden glow of sunset? They are made of the remains of sea animals. In a similar way, these gigantic mountains happen to be the shucks of bone that you have cast off in your progress down the ages on the wheel of *samsara*. That is the mountain of your own previous deaths. By walking to it tomorrow, do you really want to increase it?"

The guru says this with resignation, a resignation implicit in *samsara* since first it was formulated. We may ask ourselves how and why the idea was thought of, for if the doctrine is a terrible rather than a pleasant solution to a disturbing problem, why was it invented, and if invented, so readily accepted? Why was it not abolished and forgotten?

In all probability the idea was not an Aryan one at all. It did not exist among the Aryans before they came to India. The Aryans were a conquering minority, and a conquering minority is modified by the overwhelming weight of the culture that it conquers. Quite unexpectedly *samsara* unfolds in the oldest *Upanishads* as a sacred, secret knowledge. It is first propounded not as a doctrine, but as a possibility; a new idea cautiously admitted to the corpus of previous belief, but an idea full-grown. Many Indologists believe that it was a belief of the Dravidian autochthonous inhabitants of India.

Such a view is altogether sensible, for *samsara* is such a theory as would occur to a people in a primitive state of liquid consciousness, devoted to animism and totemism; to a people, in other words, for whom the interrelationship of all beings and the concept of an eternal group liquid consciousness flowing through all things were altogether natural. Such an idea of the nature of the soul was comprehensible and familiar to the primitive Dravidian temperament. It was not either reasonable or congenial to the Aryan invaders,

with their higher concept of the importance of the individual ego. We may then ask why they took it over.

The answer may be, as we can observe in the later history of the Roman empire, that the subjugated majority contaminates the mentality of the master minority, chiefly through contacts with the young. The Dravidian inhabitants of India were used as slaves by the Aryans, not only for heavy field work, but also as nursemaids, wet nurses, and family domestics, positions where their influence upon the growing children was intensive.

We have had enough of this process in our own deep South to comprehend the osmosis of ideas that goes on in what might be called mammy culture. We can quite well imagine a small Aryan boy falling down and hurting himself, and his dark Dravidian nurse saying, "Honey, if you die you will probably become a butterfly, one of the creatures you love so much." For her it is a natural suggestion, and the child, on a more primitive level of consciousness than he will have when he is an adult, absorbs it, remembers it, and perhaps thinks of it later on. If so, he will not think of it in the vigor of his manhood, but in his old age, when he sits alone in the woods and has nothing to think about but death. Thus he evolves the *Upanishads* and remembers the butterfly, for old age remembers its childhood better than its youth; and the first impressions we obtain are the last we take away from life. To avoid an Aryan death, he turns back to the Dravidian *samsara* of his childhood, and finds some truth in it. Perhaps, he thinks, the Dravidians may after all be right. And it is exactly with that edge of wistful speculation that we find the idea of *samsara* first stated in the *Upanishads*.

Within the framework of Aryan thought the theory of *samsara* was a paradox, for it did not suit the dimensions of Man's expanded sense of personal identity, but was a procrustean bed on which he has reposed uneasily ever since. It is an idea of the subconscious, rather than one of the conscious, mind. From time to time in life, though we forget it eagerly, we touch upon certain moments of liquid consciousness, and the loss of self involved seems to us terrible, even though we gain something by the anonymity involved.

To the integrated individual with a highly organized personality, the idea of *samsara* is horrifying precisely because it is an unmotivated phenomenon that exists for no reason and to no purpose. In such a form *samsara* would not have existed for more than a single



generation. To be made acceptable to those of developed consciousness, it had to be given a rationale. Such a rationale was provided by the doctrine of karma.

Karma is one of the central ideas of Indian thought, and has been a pervasive influence upon moral conduct since the earliest times, for karma lends a moral justification and a purpose to *samsara*.

The root of the word karma is the Indo-European *kr*, to create, which we find in such key words as democracy (the powerful and creative masses) and such names as Charles, Karl, Carol, or Old German Kerl, a doer, or maker. The word indicates activity, accomplishment, and fitness. In Indian thought karma means not only action, but all the possible consequences of action. It is also the wellspring of a particular action.

When we consider karma we find that it has three meanings: its meaning in the future, which is the consequence of what is done now, and in which it has the aspect of unalterable activity or destiny; its existence as a present act; and its existence as the things that went to make up the present act, that is, the past. Karma interlocks in all three realms, for it involves a different concept of time than we possess in the Occident.

To the westerner, time is a one-way street leading to some definite terminal point in the future that we cannot identify, but which we are sure is there. And to the westerner the future does not yet exist, and will not until tomorrow. To the Oriental mind the future is made today; it already exists in our present actions; it has already occurred; and it will be experienced tomorrow and not today, but otherwise is of a piece with today.

The western mind has never really come to grips with the nature of the present. It tends to see the present in terms of a day, or 24 hours, an area of safety around us protecting us alike from the past and from the future, and one in which we have freedom of movement and choice.

When we actually think of the matter, we see that the present is a division of time so minute that we are too big to deal with it. Every sentence we utter, every action we take, before it is completed is already partly in the past and, insofar as it produces an inevitable reflex action to come, already in the future. In what an Occidental

calls the present, we actually move through the future, present, and past.

Let us say that time is an infinitely broad river, in which, to the Occidental, all the fish swim the same way, whereas to the Oriental, the fish, though swimming roughly in the same direction, dart back and forth. By means of our actions we set a net for such fish. To the westerner, if some of these fish escape through the meshes of our immediate actions, then they are lost forever. Thus we have the Occidental notion of sin, of guilt connected with the feeling of remorse, an endless sadness and regret for opportunities missed forever. We are therefore neurotically tense to make the most of the present moment, to fill time completely so that these potentials may not elude us.

But among the Hindus, and by means of Buddhism, which Hinduism so profoundly influenced, throughout the eastern world, this situation does not exist. To the East time is not a constantly flowing river into the future, but a wheel. It always revolves full circle. No moment is ever totally lost because it will be repeated. There is always another chance, for what I should have done at this time, month and year, I can do again when I once more arrive at this time and month next year. Thus the Orient is without haste. The moment is not of essential importance, because it is not thought to be irretrievable. Remorse is therefore singularly absent, and sins either of omission or commission are not absolute. This is still another reason why Christian missionaries have had difficulty in converting the East. They have felt the East to have no feeling of sin or guilt; the East, in return, has felt that the western concept of sin and guilt was rather narrow and limited. It has been as difficult to introduce the moral ideas of the Orient, of samsara and karma, to the West, for one world order does not understand another readily. The East is dominated by the concept of the wheel, the Occident, by that of the straight line, and the two, though taken for granted by each, seem to each other miraculous, irrational, and incompatible.

It is difficult to determine whether such basic concepts are rooted in different time concepts, or vice versa, and perhaps neither is the whole truth. But until it is possible to convince the westerner that his linear concept of time is not the only valid one, he will find it difficult to absorb the idea that he will be reborn after he dies. It

seems to him miraculous. To the eastern temperament it is not miraculous at all. For us it is almost impossible truly to understand. When a westerner believes in reincarnation, he believes in it in a way that an oriental would not, for he sees it to be a thrilling and unusual solution to a problem, something to be accepted on faith and therefore a mystery. To the Asian it is nothing of the kind, and to tell an Indian that once he is dead he is dead and everything is over for him is to tell him nonsense. He in his turn would take that to be a miracle, to be accepted only on faith.

For us to understand the doctrine of karma is no easy matter. Karma, to the East, is the dynamic motor force activating the wheel of life, a perpetual motion machine made possible because no moral friction exists within it.

When we try to comprehend karma in terms of our own language concepts, we need three different expressions to match the three parts of it that stand in the present, future, and past for us, but to the Indian are a totality. Karma, in its present sense, is what we do now; in terms of the future it is our destiny, the consequence of our present acts; and in terms of the past, it is the inherent character we have, produced by still previous action, insofar as the past is an accumulated previous future. In short, karma is character, action, and fate.

Karma is the moral justification of samsara, a system of rewards and benefits determined not by evaluative judgments and purposive acts, but merely phenomenological. Karma, which obviously does not work itself out in one lifetime, therefore gives a directional thrust to the wheel of samsara.

Immanuel Kant, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, said much the same thing when he wrote that "immortality is a postulate of practical reason," or in other words, we must accept the doctrine of immortality since otherwise God would not be just, for in looking about us we can reconcile ourselves to the inequalities of life only by believing that we see only a portion of the whole.

The Indian solves the problem in the same way. The inequalities are evened up and virtue rewarded by samsara, controlled by karma. This solution permeates all Indian thought, and is one of the things that make Hindu drama so wearing to the Occidental. For instead of three or five acts, with a beginning, middle, and an end, an Indian play is content to ramble along for ten or more acts until

someone discovers, by a revelation, that the true explanation of the present problem, a strong and unexpected fate, lies either in the childhood experiences or former incarnations of the characters. To deal with Hamlet, the Indian mind must explore the whole dynasty of Denmark. When the initial error that produces Hamlet's decision is unraveled, then the Indian spectator is satisfied. Even within such a materialistic worldview as our own, this attitude is by no means entirely absent, if we stop to consider how such a queen as Elizabeth II, in her role as queen, is controlled in her public actions by the previous existence of Elizabeth I, of whom, in her character as Elizabeth II, she is the incarnation. In such an example, incidentally, we may see how the liquid consciousness that in the Orient produced the idea of samsara, also works among us.

Karma also implies that the element of chance is totally lacking in life. There is no equivalent either in Sanskrit or in later Indian languages for our word "chance"; and when you find no word for something in a language, you may be sure that the thing itself is absent from the culture.

Everything in the Indian worldview has a very definite cause. The cause may not be apparent, but it nonetheless exists. Nor need the cause be an outwardly visible or phenomenal one, for to the Indian, scientifically demonstrable events are only the outward manifestations of an inner law. In such a world moral causes are the ultimate causes, so that whatever happens to the individual may be traced to some initial act of his in some previous karma. That chance is totally excluded from such a view may be illustrated in many simple ways.

For example, if you are out for a walk and a brick falls from a roof and breaks your arm, you seek first surgical care and second legal redress. You notify the proper authorities, who conclude that the brick was loosened by rains, weathering, and neglect, put up a sign to warn people away from the danger area, settle whatever legal claim you may make against them, and send someone to repair the roof, so that such an accident may not happen again. The accident was caused by chance, by which we understand the purely fortuitous and random collusion of events, and it is dealt with empirically. Such is the western view.

Should you meet with such an accident in India, the matter would be viewed and ordered differently. Let us say that a pandit

walks across the yard of his ashram and that the same accident happens to him. He is injured, but his pain is double, for added to his physical pain is a moral one. He asks himself what moral transgression of what former karma brought about his accident. Indeed, the accident is to him not an accident at all, but the inevitable working out of his karma. He will not call attention to his hurt, for he feels that it exposes a moral flaw in his nature. He also knows that far from evoking sympathy, his accident will leave others faintly disappointed in him, for they will feel that, if he is a person to whom evil can happen, then it is because he was himself evil in some previous life, or, covertly, in his present one.

Such an attitude is totally foreign to the western mind. It has to be experienced to be understood. I once had my watch stolen at an ashram close to the River Ganges, although my cottage was padlocked. Since I had previously had things stolen by monkeys, I thought the present theft was the same sort of thing; in short, an accident. When I told one of the inmates of the ashram about the theft, he made a sadly disappointed face and said, "We will find out." The watch was finally found sewn in the pillow of a poor Pakistani refugee who had become a barber at the ashram. The monks recovered it and beat the refugee out of the ashram, and on that level the matter was settled. But they still felt profoundly sorry for me, for in finding out and causing the barber to be punished I had committed a negative act, which was bad for my karma. They foresaw that as a result my future would be less fortunate than it would otherwise have been, and that my past was less fortunate than they had supposed, otherwise the watch would not have been stolen, thus forcing me to endanger my own karma by damaging the thief. One's karma, like one's breathing, is involuntary and yet capable, within certain limits, of being controlled. The Occidental casuist, J. P. Gury, in his *Moraltheologie*, dealt with this aspect of our actions when he wrote:

An action which is the outcome of an inordinate desire is certainly an act of the will, but it is by no means formally voluntary and free; for, as the attention of the mind is completely annulled, so too must freedom and self-determination be completely lacking.<sup>8</sup>

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\* J. P. Gury, "Cursus Moralis," quoted in René Fülöp-Miller, *The Power and Secrets of the Jesuits* (New York: Viking Press, 1939), p. 149.

It is the general habit of the West to see moral choice operating only in compliance with certain divinely ordained postulates; of the East, to see moral choice dependent upon previous moral choice. Behind all the moral acts of the West lies an ultimate starting point. But to the Eastern mind the system is a wheel and self-contained. It is not the duty, nor is it the privilege, of the comparative theologian to point out which of the two is the subtler viewpoint; it is emphatically his obligation to distinguish how different these viewpoints are.

In the realm of everyday life, the eschatological attitude involved in karma leads to much inconvenience. The habit of being still about one's own injuries, and of keeping to one's self this revelation of a flawed karma, produces considerable physical discomfort and confusion. The great Bhagavan Maharsi once broke his arm while walking in South India and set it himself. We in the West would consider this reasonable conduct; but we find it harder to understand why he should tell no one of his injury, being afraid to reveal the flaw in his karma; or that he should then sit in the shade of a tree to meditate upon the causes of what to him was an inevitable moral event.

Since a moral event is produced and can be investigated only by moral means, nobody in India is going to face an accident as we in the West would, either by repairing the defaulting brick or roof tile, or by searching for sympathy. Such an attitude has the unfortunate result that most of India is seldom if ever kept in repair. Nor does the gentleman wounded by a falling roof tile collect accident insurance. Since to him no accident is an accident, insurance against something that does not exist would be superfluous. This is by no means a shiftless attitude: on the contrary the injured man is deeply concerned about what has happened to him, but concerned in a different way than we would be. The turn of mind is ingrained.

It is not always possible, nor has it ever been, for a person to discover the moral cause, or karma, that has led to some good or bad event in his life that we would ascribe to chance. It may take a lifetime of meditation to do so; or it may not be possible at all.

The first section of the ancient Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, deals with such a situation. It describes a king who suffers every possible misfortune during his reign. He therefore wishes to retire in favor of his beloved son Rama, whose karma will perhaps be more favor-



able. Preparations are made for the ceremonial crowning of Rama.

As they go forward, one of the wives of the king is persuaded by her nursemaid that it is wicked that the son of another wife should succeed, when her own son is as beautiful and as skillful as the successor chosen. At first the wife does not want to listen to her nursemaid, for being of a lower caste, the maid clearly represents her mistress's lower feelings. So the queen, torn both ways, and fearful for her own lower nature, bursts into tears and retires into the Chamber of Complaint. The Chamber of Complaint was a special chamber set aside in the harem, to which wives whose nerves had become frayed by the ardors of harem life might retire to moan, wail, petition the king, or sulk, so that their ill temper might not pervade the whole palace, and also in order that their grievance might become known.

The king learned of her retirement and came to her. She confessed that she was dissatisfied because her son was not to succeed to the throne, rather than Rama. It was only a few hours before the coronation. The king had forgotten that he had once granted the wife two boons, but that she had taken advantage of neither. She had not forgotten this promise, so she demanded first that her son should succeed, and second, that Rama be banished for fourteen years. The king was forced to grant both wishes and then died unhappily, with the dreadful feeling that this unwonted act forced upon him by a younger wife was moral retribution for some previous error of his own. Just before his death he realized what that error had been.

He recollected that as a youth he once went hunting. It was the pride of Indian huntsmen to be able to shoot not only on sight, but by ear, identifying by the sound of movement through the tall grasses the location of the quarry. The king had shot at what, by its noise, he had identified as an elephant, only to discover to his horror that he had killed a young brahmin boy. To kill a brahmin was and is the worst form of murder, even when the act is involuntary. Dying, the boy instructed the king to tell his parents. The king went to the parents, who were old and blind, and told them he had slain their son. They cursed him, for the king had killed not only the boy, but indirectly the parents, by taking away their sole support. The curse was that the king should also be deprived of his heir and die alone. In so stating, the parents made less a curse, than a

statement of fact, for karma is inevitable and exactly equals good for good and evil for evil. These old people did not so much curse the king, therefore, as display foresight.

Recalling this, the old king could die in peace, for he had expiated his evil act and would not be burdened by the necessity of expiating it in his next reincarnation on the wheel of samsara.

Just as Michelangelo shaped the statue of David out of an ungainly stone, so may we shape our present karma, which we have inherited from our previous acts, into a more manly shape that will be our next incarnated karma. Nothing is lost or overlooked, and karma has no prime cause. It merely works. But we ourselves, in all our acts, are responsible for the way in which it works for us.

Such a vision of the persona or soul is totally beyond any concept of rewards, benefits, or punishments, for it is seen to be a law of nature, not a moral law of man. To insure our steady improvement of our lot, it behooves us to oil the wheels, by means of good actions, and not to retard ourselves by the performance of bad ones. The problem of good and evil, in this sense, is purely functional. We must remember that in the Occidental view, rewards, benefits, and punishments involve more than an equal act, for they are in the nature of bonuses and fines. In karma no such concept of rewards or punishments is possible, for the good and evil we receive is exactly commensurate with the good or evil we do or have done. If we believe that we get exactly what we deserve, and that we may expect no bonus for good behavior, then the system has an inevitability and certainty that is not possible under what we might call the bonus system of European ethics.

We may ask ourselves why, if in the world of reincarnation samsara and karma are commensurate, there are seeming inequalities. The answer is that there are no such real inequalities, but that all forms of life are symbolic conditions. If a man acts like a pig, he is shaping himself to be reborn as a pig. If he behaves like a saint or a deva, then he is already becoming the saint or deva he will be in his next reincarnation. To the Indian worldview, the entire creation is a parable. As human nature becomes informed by goodness, it will seek a higher form; if informed by evil, a lower. But it may take many reincarnations to work the pattern out.

Some of the feeling of this progress of the soul may be discovered also in the West, in the doctrine of the Neo-Platonist Plotinus, who

told his biographer that he was ashamed to be in a body, or that, in other words, the material reincarnation is not a fit vehicle for the aspiring soul that would rise to Heaven. Intrinsic to Man's nature as a part of divinity is his ability to become an angelic being, not because God will reward his goodness, but because it is the nature of his goodness that it will inevitably, like water, find its own level, even if after long search and effort.

There are several pragmatic objections to such a worldview. You may ask how, for example, if karma and samsara are constant, do the Indians account for the constant increase in population to which they are notoriously subject? The answer to this and similar questions is that the Indians do not account for it at all, and do not in any event believe that the conclusions of mundane science are pertinent to the discussion of the superreal, or even to the observation of the effects of the superreal that we denominate ethics. There is, of course, an Indian casuistry that has made an adjustment between ethics and science, and would tell you that if the human population has increased, then the animal has decreased; but such explanations are temporary sophistry, and need not detain us from an examination of more permanent ethical problems, as, indeed, they do not detain even those who make use of them.

Another of the confusions felt in the West about the nature of karma is that it is seen to be fatalistic, but this is not in the least true. Karma has nothing in common with the Moslem principle of *kismet*, the can-do-nothing philosophy of inevitable fate, for according to karma, it is within the power of man to add to or diminish both his goodness and his badness by the performance of additional acts not accounted for by his previous incarnation or behavior. In addition, since nothing in the Indian system is controlled by chance, and since neither good nor evil may befall the Indian from any morally exterior agent or fortuitously, the Indian has absolute certainty that he himself is entirely and fully responsible for his own destiny; and that even an unavoidable choice that leads him to the endangerment of his future karma is the direct result of one of his previous acts. Morally, he is thus totally responsible for himself, and therefore he *must* strive for his own salvation. Since any evil he does to others is evil done to himself doubly compounded, his sense of social responsibility, though certainly not altruistic, is perhaps the firmer for not being so. Since all men are controlled by

self-interest, it is better that that interest be enlightened than that it be concealed. It is a western tendency to search for an exterior scapegoat, ultimately in the Devil, and we conceive of evil as an exterior force. This tactic conveniently frees us of much responsibility, for though it means that we may be tempted, it prevents us from being our own temptation. The Indian is his own scapegoat; he is absolutely alone with himself, and since nothing can save him but himself, he will be, at least ideally, less apt to make a scapegoat of others. Insofar as pain, disease, and death are not terminal situations to the Indian mind, but only the consequences of moral acts in their occurrence, and acts of transition in their nature, the attitude toward these things is far different than it is with us. If Man does not punish the westerner for the evil he does, he is safe until judgment day; a promise of endless parole. The Indian, on the other hand, will most realistically suffer for the evil he does in the next body he inhabits, and consequences of a spiritual sort are thus as actual and immediate to him as the legal consequences of, say, detected homicide are to us. To the western mind, an evil must be detected before it can be punished, even by God. But to the Indian an evil is automatically the cause of punishment as soon as it is committed, whether detected or not. The endless evasions of Indian life arise not from the fear of detection, but from that of commission, which is a much more sobering thing.

Then again, to the Indian mind it is not only the murderer, but also the victim who is guilty. If we explore depth psychology we soon discover that the one to whom evil occurs has at least partly attracted the evil to himself, and so is partly responsible for it, an accessory before the fact, or, in the jargon of popular psychiatry, accident prone.

Freud, in his *Mistakes of Everyday Life*, traces almost every seemingly chance happening to the workings of our subconscious, down to the point where he says that very few automobile accidents are ever caused by automobiles, most of them being caused by the men who drive them. This statement is undeniably correct. We can follow that line of reasoning down to the responsibility of the subconscious, which directs the accidental to its own ends, and may contrive, for instance, to kill those in the back seat of the automobile, but not those in front. Accidents are not only manageable, they are probably managed completely by our unconscious tendencies.

It was for similar reasons that Samuel Butler, in *Erewhon*, made misfortune a criminal offense.

Particularly in view of what depth psychology has to tell us, we are apt to find the idea of karma increasingly beguiling. We might even accept it, were it not linked to the terrors of *samsara*, the incessant wheel of reincarnation.

A friend of mine once went to say goodbye to Dr. Jung, in Zurich, for what she felt would be the last time. She wanted to say something, but she did not know quite what to say. She admired Dr. Jung highly. At last she said, "Dear Doctor, I hope that all will come to you that you deserve." Dr. Jung laughed and said, "What a silly thing to say. Of course it will." For Jung, as for practically all psychologists, it is a truism to say that you will get what you deserve, which is, in a way, a manner of acquiescing to some of the conclusions involved in the idea of karma. The discoveries of psychology have taught us to see how apparently opposed traditions may not, after all, be so innately different. Indeed most diametrically opposed ideas result from the same procedure used in looking at the same star through different ends of the telescope.

Many westernized cults, including the occultists and theosophists, have adopted the idea of karma, though they would disengage the scarcely separable doctrine of *samsara* from it in whole or part. To the Indian mind this cannot be done, for it takes more than one life to work out one's karma, as it took more than one life to produce it. The Buddhist mind offers us eventual liberation from the wheel of *samsara*, but only by an infinitely slow process akin to Thomas Hardy's evolutionary ameliorism; the grudging theory that though life is perhaps improving, it is doing so at such an infinitesimal rate as to be scarcely perceptible.

Karma is an eternal activity of the soul, and touches the individual body only incidentally. The goal of those in the West who seek to improve the soul is ultimate, achievable, certain, and final salvation. To the Hindu mind this is nearly impossible. The Indian does not believe that "in my end is my beginning." Optimism and pessimism are outside his scale of values. To him his end is only an infinitely repeatable event of his being.

In no sense is this conception fatalistic. It is beyond the scope of fatalism, which judges the immediate act in terms of its finality and immediacy. To the Indian mind all acts are optional, insofar as



everything that in this present existence seems inevitable is the result of some choice in a previous embodiment.

In insisting upon the personal ethical responsibility of Man even for what appears to happen to him fortuitously, karma is an extremely moral doctrine, and also a satisfactory one, in that it leaves no question that can be raised within its moral system unanswered.

But karma involves samsara, which is unpleasant. There is a story by Chekhov that tells of a peasant girl who has to stay up with her owner's bawling child. She gets no sleep at all for nine or ten days. Eventually she murders the child, not because she dislikes it, but because she *has* to sleep. In the same way, the Indians would abolish the self, unable to endure the pain of eternal consciousness. But it is virtually impossible for them to do so.

Far from being opiates, religions always embody a dreadful wakefulness, a terror that nothing can deaden: another proof that the Marxian theory that religion is the product of wishful thinking is an extremely unscientific and unsatisfactory one. We might better say, if we must use the phrase at all, that ritual is the opiate of those who cannot stand the pain of facing the subject of religion.

Religion answers no questions. The true religious act is in itself the asking of a question. Not only for cautious and practical reasons do oracles give their answers in riddles. Questions and answers are specific and finite things dealing with specific and finite problems. The Being of Being is beyond these concerns. When we seek the oracle it is not an answer that we seek, but contact with the oracle itself. This truth may well explain why no historic oracle was ever discredited until the faith of which it was the mundane voice ceased to be truly alive.

Religions in their prime feel the religious act to be a self-imposed task, not an easy solution; only in decadent periods do we find an upholstered and comfortable heaven waiting to receive the faithful. Because the idea of samsara was horrible, and eternally repeated life did not satisfy the desire for *amrta*, or the overcoming of the horror of death and decay, we find in the *Upanishads* a ceaseless attempt to find some release from the whole process of samsara.

This release took the form of the realization of the true Self within, of the *atman* that, not being subject to decay, may be called the Immortal Self. This *atman* we find first mentioned in the *Katha Upanishad*, which relates the universal legend of Nachiketas, who



goes down into the realms of the underworld and converses with death, having been given by his father to Yama, Lord of Death.

If the *Vedas* present us with the primitive mythology and world-view of the Aryans, to which, in the *Upanishads*, are added an explanation of our existence in the world in terms of karma and samsara; the development of the concept of the atman, the Self, the soul, or essential principle that invests Man, lends to our existence the dignity of a higher purpose.

The *Katha Upanishad* deals, in story and dialogue form, with that atman, with:

The Person not larger than a thumb, the inner Self, (which) is always settled in the heart of men. Let man draw that Self forth from his body with steadiness, as one draws the pith from a reed. Let him know that Self as the Bright, as the Immortal; yes, as the Bright, as the Immortal.<sup>9</sup>

This Self is seen to be one with Brahman:

He, the highest Person, who is awake in us while we are asleep, shaping one lovely sight after another, that indeed is the Bright, that is Brahman, that alone is called the Immortal. All worlds are contained in it, and no one goes beyond.<sup>10</sup>

It is this spirit that alone can free us from the torments of samsara.

The *Katha Upanishad* tells of an Aryan Lord who has sacrificed everything to the devas, excepting his son, Nachiketas. The boy feels towards his father as Isaac felt towards Abraham, and asks to which god his father will dedicate him. The other gods have already been placated, and there remains only Death. Therefore the father sacrifices his son to Yama, Lord of Death. That is, he gives up his last cherished possession, his son and the continuance of himself, to death, to whom ultimately we must sacrifice all. The *Katha Upanishad* may well originally have been a dramatic monologue or play, for it takes the form of a dialogue between Nachiketas and Yama. But the boy is not sacrificed literally, and while still in the body he takes his place as the last of the throng that continually passes from the House of Life into the House of Death. Because he is not dead, the Lord Yama is not present to receive him. He remains alone in the House of Death for three days. At the end of

<sup>9</sup> Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XV, Part 2, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

that time Yama hastens to receive him, for the boy is a brahmin, and one cannot insult a brahmin. Even though Yama is a god, he cannot incur any sin in his karma, otherwise he would fall from perfect godliness. The devas are not immortal in our sense: they are immortal only for so long as they conduct themselves properly enough to be reincarnated in their own semblance.

To atone for his neglect of the boy, Yama grants him three boons. Nachiketas asks first that his father shall not be indignant when he returns from the realm of the dead; and this Yama, as a deva capable of controlling the thoughts of men, promises him. Indeed, he grants him the secret of incessant life by teaching him a special type of sacrifice that will be called Nachiketas Fire, by means of which he can gain an indefinite mortal term. This is the second boon, and it does not satisfy Nachiketas, any more than the parallel idea of samsara satisfied the Aryan mind. So Nachiketas asks as his third boon to be taught about the meaning of death and of what comes after death. He must ask this, for it is understood in India that no teacher need volunteer information. Since a guru is responsible not only for his own karma, but for that of his pupils, he is none too pleased to have students at all. But if the student demands to be taught, then to reject him is to do evil, and also to endanger the guru's karma. Thus Yama must answer Nachiketas. All the same he attempts to dissuade Nachiketas from his wish, for he explains, "This is an extremely hard point to argue. It is almost impossible for a mortal being to understand and grasp the meaning of it." Even the devas themselves have doubted the meaning of death and the difference between life and death, which produces the search for amṛta. Nachiketas again insists, insofar as Death should know something of the matter.

Yama tells him that he can abolish death indefinitely, and offers him any amount of pleasure and wealth not to ask his third question. "What," says Nachiketas, "shall I do with all these treasures, with all these pleasures; when we see you, all these things vanish—so I will insist that you teach me."

So Yama is after all constrained to answer the ultimate mystery, though as we read the *Katha Upanishad*, we are slightly disappointed by his answer, as is only natural. The time at which the *Upanishads* were set down was a great period of transition and of dynamic investigation, but it could not yet give answers to the

questions it asked, so the answers provided by the *Upanishads* are tentative answers:

He (the Self) of whom many are not even able to hear, whom many, even when they hear of him, do not comprehend; wonderful is he who comprehends him, when taught by an able teacher. That (Self) when taught by an inferior man, is not easy to be known, even though often thought upon; unless it be taught by another, there is no way to it, for it is inconceivably smaller than what is small. That doctrine is not to be obtained by argument, but when it is declared by another, then, O dearest, it is easy to understand. Thou hast obtained it now; thou art truly a man of true resolve. May me have always an inquirer like thee!<sup>11</sup>

But:

That Self cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by understanding, nor by much learning. He whom the Self chooses, by him the Self can be gained. The Self chooses him (his body) as his own.

But he who has not first turned away from his sickness, who is not tranquil, and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self (even) by knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

This Self, the *atman*, is a much more important aspect of the self, persona, or ego than is the *jiva*, or living principle that migrates from incarnation to incarnation. Indeed the *atman* might almost be called the living principle of the *jiva*.

To a religious person death is a religious matter. Neither *samsara*, the endless repetition of life, nor *karma*, the moral process involved in that repetition, can ever answer our ultimate question about death, for they are only ways of evading death, by which, in religious terms, is meant not corporeal death, but the idea of extinction in all its aspects. Something eludes us both in our death and our life. The meaning of each is difficult to determine. Therefore this thing that eludes us must be something different from either. So we must be able to say that death is not death, as the Apostle Paul says, "Death, where is thy sting?" Thus we abolish it and see beyond it, but what do we see there?

When we have abolished everything that is, has been, or possibly can be, and yet find that we still have something, then what we have is something that *is*. About this something we can say very little:

That word or place which all the Vedas record, which all penances proclaim, which men desire when they live as religious students, that

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

word I tell thee briefly, it is Om. That imperishable syllable means Brahman, that syllable means the highest Brahman; he who knows that syllable, whatever he desires, is his. This is the best support, this is the highest support; he who knows that support is magnified in the world of Brahma.<sup>13</sup>

Of Brahma and Brahman we are told:

He (Brahman) is the swan (sun), dwelling in the bright heaven; he is the Vasu (air), dwelling in the sky; he is the sacrificer (fire), dwelling on the hearth; he is the guest (Soma) dwelling in the sacrificial jar; he dwells in men, in gods, in the sacrifice, in heaven; he is born in the water, on earth, in the sacrifice, on the mountains; he is the true and the great. He (Brahman) it is who sends up the breath (prana), and who throws back the breath (apana). All the Devas (senses) worship him, the dwarf, who sits in the centre.<sup>14</sup>

Brahman is then one with:

The person (purusha) of the size of a thumb (who) stands in the middle of the Self, as lord of the past and the future, and henceforward fears no more. That person, of the size of a thumb, is like a light without smoke, lord of the past and the future, he is the same to-day and to-morrow.<sup>15</sup>

As for what happens to Brahman in death:

When that incorporated (brahman) who dwells in the body is torn away and freed from the body, what remains then? No mortal lives by the breath that goes up and by the breath that goes down. We live by another, in whom these two repose.<sup>16</sup>

It is liberated, for:

If a man could not understand it before the falling asunder of his body, then he has to take body again in the worlds of creation.<sup>17</sup>

It lies beyond the samsara and karma chain, in other words. Union with it is the only way to evade that chain, by rising beyond it.

When all desires that dwell in his heart cease, then the mortal becomes immortal, and obtains Brahman. When all the ties of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal—here ends the teaching.<sup>18</sup>

As for the nature of Brahman:

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

I saw Eternity the other night  
 Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
     All calm, as it was bright;  
 And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,  
     Driven by the spheres  
 Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world  
     And all her train were hurled.<sup>10</sup>

So says the English recusant poet Henry Vaughan, and it is all we can see. It is the core of the mystical or religious experience. At the northern and southern extremities of the world, on cold nights, you will suddenly become discomforted and taken out of yourself. You hear a peculiar, scarcely audible, perhaps not physically audible, perhaps not even existent hissing all around you in the air, and in the dark light of the skies suddenly there spreads out in depthless space, from no point of origin, having no exact moment of arrival or departure, the vast shimmering presence of the aurora, which has no substance, a light without fire, immense and unforgettable. It is a good image for the Being of Being, which is common to all faiths, but beyond them all; and it is the desire of the soul, as it is the property, that it is liberated to become one with this Being of Being. You are then one with Brahman. Or with God. Religions are many different windows, letting light into a variety of rooms, but all with the same view. You have found the that, the tat, the ultimate beyond all existence, which contained within us is the atman, or spirit; but is in itself beyond all feelings about it, or apprehensions of it, or attitudes towards it, of which we are capable.

There are many words in many languages that exist not so much to identify, for that is impossible, as to establish the existence of the Being of Being that is the soul of the soul. We could equate the atman with the Christian word Holy Spirit. We cannot say what it really means, for the atman is the consciousness of consciousness, and is not psychologically describable. This vagueness should not disturb us. None of the ultimate concepts of Man is describable, except by a process or example that turns out to be no more than an analogy. How deep is depth, or what, in view of the fact that all definitions of it cancel each other out but still leave something we cannot identify, is beauty?

<sup>10</sup> Henry Vaughan, *Poems* (London: George Bell and Sons Ltd., 1883), p. 126.

The atman can only be formulated by saying that it is the "I." It is the "I" apart from our other egos and different from them, which perceives life and existence, even the life and existence of the self, without being in any way in it or involved in it.

William James, in his *Introduction to Psychology*, defines such a condition, or concept of the atman, independently of Indian thought, when he points out the ontological difference between the I and the Me. He says that one can say I am, but not that I am this or that. No definition matches the condition of being. I cannot say I see I, or I know I. It is grammatically impossible precisely because it is factually impossible. One cannot make "to be" statements about the self, but only "to know" statements. One can say, I know me; but you cannot say I know I. Whatever is noticeable, definable, desirable within the inner world is the psychologically registerable "me," but it is not that which is "I." We can and do identify ourselves most of the time with what psychologists call the persona, or projected image of ourselves. We make value judgments about this externalized and projected self. We say we feel gloomy, even, by a species of metaphor, that we are gloomy. Usually we are wrong about such statements in any event; but we are always wrong insofar as the "I" we discuss is not the "I" that is our real, unspeakable self.

The mistake is to establish one's self on the map of being, without perceiving that in defining the self one merely looks at it, so that what one sees is not the self in itself, but the self as it appears to be. It is exactly the same mistake as the theological error set forth in Plato's allegory of the cave, wherein we watch the shadows, take them for reality, and know nothing of and will not believe in the existence of the fire that casts them before us. Indeed, if you consider the allegory of the cave, you will see that not only were the theological shadows cast upon the wall of the cave, but also the heads of the spectators, who, sitting between the wall and the fire, would take their own shadows for reality, as well as the shadows of the figures carried on poles.

The *Upanishads* solve all such problems by figures, parables, and examples. It is the general method of the human mind, so that in all cultures and in all periods of development of any one culture, you will somewhere find the idea that since nothing can see itself, except as an external reflection, then the self we *can* perceive is not the self we know to be there. If you think about the matter as you



say any sentence beginning with the word "I," you will observe that your feeling of self is somewhat uneasy at the inaccuracy of the statement about yourself you are making. There is always a discrepancy between what we know to be true about the self and any true statement we may make about that knowledge. Unfortunately this part of the self, which we might call the innate undefinable self, absolutely eludes scientific observation, for it is beyond behavior data, and therefore it makes modern science somewhat uncomfortable. It is inviolable private property, and since it cannot be got at, neither can it be controlled. Since we live in a paranoiac age that flees to definition as a criminal of the middle ages fled to sanctuary, we can support the social contract only by ignoring the existence of the inviolable self. In religious and in psychological terms, this method is apt to become extremely dangerous.

It is an irony of our physiological natures that we, who perceive the world with our senses, find it almost impossible to perceive ourselves by the same means. When once I bought pictures of Sri Aurobindo at his Ashram in Pondicherry, I was told, "Of course these pictures show only his body." It is this lack that makes photographs so unsatisfactory to us when we examine them for long. What we know of a person, if we are close to him, is his animating spirit, and this is precisely what no representation can show us, for it has no concrete form.

We all have in our possession snapshots of ourselves that have gone wrong. They make us uncomfortable. Suppose that one shows you in a chair from the pectorals down. All you can see of yourself is some hands and legs dangling down from nowhere. To this extent you see what other people see, but what you see is not you, and I cannot see that "you" either. Nobody can. Whenever we see an image of ourselves, particularly if it is an unauthorized snapshot or a painting we have had to pay for, we feel cheated and say, "That is not me." And of course we are quite right. It is not; for very few of us match even our faces. Beyond the eyes that we have, with which we observe the world, we have another seeing "I," in which we see ourselves. But beyond that is the "I" itself, which is ourselves, and which cannot see or be seen. The same is true of our voices and of all our senses.

Yet if you have ever been through any crisis that seriously af-

fected your body, your mind, your emotions, or your persona, you must have been aware of another "I" that was not affected by these happenings at all, and was only intermittently aware of them. An "I" that could not be touched by them, but was in a state of amṛta. If you have perceived this, then you will begin to see how the Self partakes of the Being of Being, and so of amṛta, or deathlessness. For amṛta is deathlessness in being beyond any conceivable change, as is the Being of Being, and as is this aspect of the Self, or atman, which partakes of its nature.

One way in which the guru, or teacher, brings home the reality of the true status of the atman to his students is by experiment. The student asks the teacher to teach him what the atman is. What, he asks, am I?; and to the Indian philosopher this remains the supreme problem.

In one case the teacher said that the student should learn by experience. He was locked in a small room with nothing to eat. Next morning the teacher came, shouted his name, and said, Now do you know what you are? The student said he was hungry. The teacher went away and returned morning after morning, always asking the same question. The student knew very well what he was. He was hungry.

At last the teacher opened the door and gave him food. "Now we know what you are. You are hungry," he said. But the student, having eaten, looked happily at his teacher and said, "Oh no, Guru. I am not hungry any more now, I am happy and satisfied." So the teacher answered, "Isn't it strange what a bowl of rice can do. Your identity has been changed within a few minutes from being hungry to being satisfied and happy. You are a fool. You were not hungry and you are not now satisfied. You are the eternal atman within, but for some reason that should be examined closely you persist in identifying yourself with all the transitory moods that you feel and see, but which are not your true being."

In other words, "I" am "I." This being so, I can know myself only by canceling out all the projected persona by which I identify myself and which are not myself, if I come to think about the matter. The "I" is in this sense the truest reality we can ever know, for it can never be altered or changed by external or even by internal evidence. *Cogito ergo sum*; I think, therefore I am, or rather, I

think upon things, therefore I am, says Descartes; and as long as we do not confuse "to think" with "to be aware" we may agree with him. The self doubts everything but the existence of the self. The great Vedanta philosopher Sankara, in the 8th century A.D., said by way of definition, "The atman is what no one has ever denied or could ever possibly deny, since nobody is able to think and to say: I am not."

Even when the self denies that the Self exists, it is only an aspect of the Self that it denies, a quarrel of words, for the consciousness that is capable of conceiving of its nonexistence remains. That, we might say, was our one sure knowledge, except that it is not knowledge. For knowledge, *inana*, which is the same word in Sanskrit as our word for rational "knowledge," being "gnosis" in Greek, presupposes a person who knows, the subject, and something that is being known, the object, and the process of interrelationships between them. When it comes to self-consciousness, to the being of atman, no process exists because there is no opposition and no identification of subject or object. In being part of the Being of Being, the atman has no identity and no relationships, for it is a microcosm of the All. It is unknowable, for as soon as we examine the "I" that is the atman, we project it onto the plane of events on which it becomes the "me," the plane of objective events, or the appearance of things.

So the "I" is always the onlooker, the witness, the foreigner, all terms to be found in the earliest Indian philosophy. Most of the great philosophical systems of India have made it the main object of their teaching to realize that the atman is one with Brahman. The atman looks at the screen of life, but never appears on it. To do so would be impossible, for the atman is the onlooker, an aspect of the Brahman, the true light that casts the shadows that are the apparent world. If you ask what are the intermediary objects by which the Brahman casts the shadow that is what we know, perhaps we can answer only that they are our perception of what is the cause of the knowable, our ability to be in between the ultimate and the immediate, though not able to see clearly either way.

Probably the most frequently quoted passage from Sanskrit is the "Tat tvam asi." The *tat*, that which cannot be described, defined or formulated, but only pointed at as being everywhere and yet nowhere; *tvam*: *tua*, *tuo*, as in Latin, you, thou; and *asi*: "art,"

the verb "to be." In other words, *That* thou art, that the atman is the aspect of the Brahman.

We do not mean that the Self is "divine" in the western sense of that word, but only that both the Brahman and the atman cannot be located on the screen of life, formulated in terms of knowledge, or in any way identified; yet they exist, or co-exist, the one a part of the other, the other a whole of whose nature the one partakes. Finding the atman that is one with Brahman is the decisive salvation from the wheel of samsara that is the screen of life in all its variety of pain or joy. Total realization of the reality of the Self that is not in any way circumstantial is the only salvation possible to Man.

It follows that if the atman may release us from the repetitive condemnation of samsara, then we must seek to get at the atman to the best of our ability. The Indian controls the atman through the exercise of yoga, a discipline that allows him to come into contact with the essential nature of the atman, which in itself is one with Brahman. Essentially yoga is a manipulation of the body in order to release the essential aspect of the mind, or rather, of the atman, by the elimination of all that hampers that release.

I must have read a considerable number of the multitude of books which have been written about the spiritual discipline of the Hindus, commonly called Yoga. Yoga is a word much misunderstood in the West because of its unfortunate association with sensational psychic pranks. In reality, yoga is a way of life as sincere as the prayer and worship of Christians, which has as its sole object knowledge of, and union with, the ultimate Reality of the Universe, known in Hinduism as Paramatman—the Supreme Self. Most of these books . . . seem to be written by people who imagine that they want God very fervently, but have no joy in following the road which leads to divine knowledge, hastening to be done with it as soon as possible.

They forget that hurry does not lead to God, to Eternity, because the Eternal is to be found in the present and not in the future. To seek for it in the future is to be off on a wild-goose chase of a tomorrow which never comes. The whole essence of *yoga*, as of any true spiritual way, is to discover the Eternal in the present by living each moment in complete sincerity and awareness. Each step on the way has to be taken as if it were the *only* one to be taken, with the devotion and delight of arriving at the Goal in one bound. This, certainly, is the meaning of the saying of Jesus, "Whatsoever things you ask for when you pray, trust that you receive them, and you shall have them." For the kingdom of heaven is not far-off; it is "at hand" and "within you." Thus the way is

not a matter of time, and the problem of how long it will take is of no importance. In reality, the way is the Goal, just as the way, the process itself, of playing music is at every stage the actual objective of playing.<sup>20</sup>

Such is an excellent synopsis of the basic attitude towards and of yoga. For the location of divinity is a paradox in all religions. It is both near and far, all around us, and unattainable. It is the most obvious of realities, and yet the most concealed. The predicament is a psychological one. It is not merely a matter of different views in perspective, but of different systems of perspective that apply to different realms of being. In religious terms, we are confronted with the paradox of transcendence and immanence, which co-exist, even though they are divergent, for they occupy a realm of being wherein the physical conditions of time and place as a means of definition are inoperative. Thus any religion loses itself in mere speculation when it emphasizes either the entirely transcendental or the entirely immanent aspect of the Divine. To think of the Divine in these terms defines not the Divine, but only the difficulty we have in realizing our relationship to it. So the atman is obviously closer to us than our skin, and yet it does not have the same kind or type of proximity. And neither subjective nor objective conceptions of the self define it.

Yoga, however, is a discipline whereby we can clear up the confusion between this "I" that is part of the Divine, and the other egos that confuse our view of it, or realization of it. Yoga removes, or to be more accurate, is the process by which we remove, our inaccurate opinions about reality. A man who follows this process is a Yogi or Yogin. And the word yoga means yoke. Yoga endeavors to yoke together the atman and the Brahman, the spirit in the self and the universal spirit of which it is an aspect, and it is the technique of learning how to do so.

Yoga is also Vi-Yoga, as its commentators point out; the process of disconnecting or disjoining the atman from the entanglements of temporal distraction. This separation is as necessary as it would be to sweep a neglected temple of dead leaves and growing weeds before we could use it for worship. Or let us say that a church has fallen into disuse and been turned into a stable. First we must re-

<sup>20</sup> Alan Watts, *Introduction to Spiritual Practices of India*, by F. Spiegelberg (San Francisco: The Greenwood Press, 1951), pp. viii-ix.

move all signs of its secular misuse, before we can reconsecrate it in order that the holy spirit may once more invest it.

In order to discover that the atman is one with Brahman, we must first establish that it is not that which is not Brahman. This differentiation we achieve by mapping out and identifying those things that Brahman is not. Yoga, in its aspect of Vi-Yoga, is the separation of the "I" from the "Me." The process is often exemplified by Indian Yogis in terms of a picture of a man who stands by the shore of a lake and sees his own counterfeit in the waters of life. The waters stand for his own inner and turbulent world of emotions, desires, drives, and sensations; for the realizable psychological world. For a moment we believe that our reflection of the self upon those waters is our reality. Since the image always alters on the ever-changing water, we feel unrooted and restless. We doubt the serenity of our fate. But Yoga would have us give that up, by perceiving that the image is only a counterfeit of our true selves.

The spirit is smothered, as it were, by ignorance, but so soon as ignorance is destroyed, spirit shines forth, like the sun when released from clouds. After the soul, afflicted by ignorance, has been purified by knowledge, knowledge disappears, as the seed or berry of the Kataka after it has purified water.

Like an image in a dream the world is troubled by love, hatred, and other poisons. So long as the dream lasts, the image appears to be real; but on awaking it vanishes.

The world appears real, as an oyster-shell appears to be silver; but only so long as the Brahman remains unknown, he who is above all, and indivisible. That Being, true, intelligent, comprehends within itself every variety of being, penetrating and permeating all as a thread which strings together beads.

In consequence of possessing diverse attributes, the supreme existence appears manifold, but when the attributes are annihilated, unity is restored. In consequence of those diverse attributes, a variety of names and conditions are supposed proper to the spirit, just as a variety of tastes and colors are attributed to water.

The body, formed by the union of five elements produced by the effect of action, is considered to be the seat of perceptions of pleasure and pain. The subtle body, which is not formed by the five (gross) elements, but by the union of the five breaths (of life) with manas, intelligence, and the ten organs, is the instrument of sensuous perception.

All that belongs to the body (must be considered) as the product of ignorance. It is visible; it is perishable as bubbles of air (on the surface of water); but that which has not these signs must be recognized as pure spirit which says of itself, "I am Brahman. Because I am distinct



from body, I experience neither birth, old age, decrepitude, nor extinction, and detached from organs of sense, I have no longer any connexion with their objects, such as sound.

This conception, "I am Brahman itself," incessantly entertained, disperses the hallucinations born of ignorance, as medicine disperses sickness.

Seated in a desert place, exempt from passion, master of his senses, let man represent to himself this spirit, one and infinite, without allowing his thoughts to stray elsewhere.

Considering the visible universe as annihilated in spirit, let a man, pure through intelligence, constantly contemplate the One Spirit, as he might contemplate the luminous ether.

The Yogin, possessing perfect discernment, contemplates all things as subsisting in himself, and thus, by the eye of knowledge, discovers that all is the One Spirit. He knows that all this movable world is spirit or that beyond spirit there is nothing; as all varieties of vase are clay, so all things he sees are spirit.<sup>21</sup>

Yoga, then, is a process of spiritual discipline. In its elementary stages it is a process by which we render ourselves capable of this higher discipline by removing the fleshly preoccupations that prevent it. We discipline the body, in order to be free to discipline the spirit afterwards. It is as though we first had to pour oil on the waters of life, to smooth out the image we found reflected there. It is necessary first to free the self from distraction.

If, by elementary yoga, called Hatha Yoga, you could so still your inner turbulence that your image became serene, you would have achieved much, and yet you would have achieved nothing. You would merely have cleared away the underbrush of the spirit, or calmed the storm on the lake. Therefore, once Hatha Yoga is mastered, one advances to Raja Yoga, the imperial or ruling yoga. You must step back from the shores of the lake, until your image disappears. Then only is the "I," or atman, forced to realize its own reality, because it can no longer identify itself with the "me." You are alone, deserted even by your outer self, but in your aloneness you realize your true Self, or atman.

Mastery over the senses is brought about through concentrated meditation upon their nature, peculiar attributes, egoism, pervasiveness and useful purpose. As a result of this perfection, there comes rapidity of action like that of mind, perception independent of the organs, and mastery over root substance.

<sup>21</sup> *Sitha Natha Dutta, Sankaracharya: His Life and Teachings* (Calcutta: Elysium Press, for The Society for the Resuscitation of Indian Literature, 1899).

There should be entire rejection of all allurements from all forms of being, even the celestial, for the recurrence of evil contacts remains possible.

When the objective forms and the soul have reached a condition of equal purity, then is at-one-ment achieved and liberation results.<sup>22</sup>

One might wonder why, if the lower self is unreal, one could not ignore it and leap to a direct realization of the atman, for why improve the self, if the self does not exist? To the Yogis of India this is impossible, for the self is so distracted that it prevents realization of the higher Self. You must first tame the horse before you can ride it, they would say, but in order to accomplish this the horse must first realize that it is being ridden. In other words, no unprepared mind is able to embrace higher insight. It is necessary to cleanse it so that it may.

Hatha Yoga embraces eight stages. The first two of these are called Yama (not to be confused with the God of Death in the *Katha Upanishad*) and Niyama, concepts that do not exist in western languages. Both words refer to discipline, but Niyama is a more intensive discipline than Yama. Neither implies asceticism. Asceticism is the product of a dualism that despises the flesh and seeks to punish it for not being spirit. To those who believe that matter and spirit are both aspects of the Divine, it is therefore an impiety; and thus the Buddha regarded it. In being the product of disgust, flesh also produces disgust in the spirit, and later, Buddhism, and also much yoga doctrine, regards this as an unwholesome attitude. To be sure you may, and indeed must, deny yourself certain things in order to become master of your own desires, and ultimately of your soul, but the things that you deny, you deny not because of their nature, but because of the nature of your desire for them. The distinction is a major difference between the attitude of the West and the East, for the East does not regard anything as innately evil in itself, but as a unity that may have both good and bad aspects, according to the way in which we evoke them. The East is not given, as is the West, to the external embodiment of moral principles. Asceticism is a form of extirpation. The discipline of yoga is a form of control. The East believes that we do not abolish things by destroying them, for the idea of them remains. Yama means no more

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<sup>22</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul, Its Science and Effect* (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1927), pp. 359, 368.

than to get hold of oneself and to decide to do something about the meaningless involvement of the self in the torturous wheel of samsara: a decision to work towards salvation. Essential to Yama is that it should be a secret doctrine, for otherwise purity of vision would be corrupted by the false pride of having purity of vision.

The Yogi desirous of obtaining higher powers should keep the Hatha-yoga very secret. For it is effectual only when it is kept secret, and becomes vain when injudiciously revealed.<sup>23</sup>

Boasting of supernatural power is the strongest impediment to its possession. So the Buddha later enumerates a number of unforgiveable mortal sins, whose commission prevents any achievement of a higher state; and paramount among these is the murder of the Buddha; another is injury to any buddha; but a third is boasting of supernatural powers. To say, "I can meditate for so and so long," or "I can control my breath," even down to the statement, which the Buddha cites, "I like to be by myself in an empty room," is a form of boasting. It does not incur a penalty, for in being a flaw, it is its own penalty, since it entangles the atman in the Me. Thus, if a yogi says he is a yogi, then he is no yogi, but a man still enmeshed in the lower self.

In passing from Yama to Niyama we go through the stage of Pabbajja, as the Buddhists call it. To undergo Pabbajja is to leave all the things that tie you to earthly existence, your family ties, even your family responsibilities, your engagement in oblivious pleasure, and to become a homeless wanderer or sannyasi. A sannyasi, of which there are hundreds of thousands in India today, and have been for the millennia of its history, is the most highly regarded of men; for he has, by his wandering, cast away entanglements of the self. Thus there is an Indian tale of a wife who complains to her husband that her sister will soon be a widow, that is, that her sister's husband is going to become a sannyasi. The first husband tells his wife that her sister will never be widowed, for talking about the matter is no way to become a sannyasi. "I will show you how one becomes a sannyasi," he says, takes off his clothes; puts on some old rags, takes a bowl to beg for his food, and leaves his wife and cottage forever.

In western terms such desertion is deemed cruelty. A recent

<sup>23</sup> Swatmaran Swami, *The Hatha-Yoga Pradipika*, trans. Shrinivas Lyangar (Bombay: The Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund, 1893), pp. 4-5.

biography of Gauguin is chiefly devoted to clearing that artist of exactly such a charge. In India it is not considered a cruelty, but a merit, for the Indian world takes it as a matter of course, as a reasonable act, and cruelty is an unreasonable or deliberately inflicted act. Then again, we must remember that since in India collective communities of large families support all smaller units within them, then a head of one branch of the family is not responsible to the degree that the head of a western family is for the support of his dependents. In India the family is not dependent, as with us, but interdependent, and therefore no one has a unique moral responsibility for it, but only a group responsibility that permits him to assume not one, but several roles. So the sannyasi, far from shirking his obligations, actually goes on to a higher obligation; and his act is so weighed socially. He lives by begging, but since no one is allowed to give him more than one spoonful of food a day, he deprives no one of anything essential. Thus he neither commits a sacrifice, as did St. Francis when he left the ranks of the responsible banking nobility, nor does he demand one, as is the essential condition of Christian charity. For though the Christian acquires virtue by giving more than is necessary, the Indian diminishes virtue if he gives too much, since in so doing he obligates the person to whom he gives it. To contribute towards the higher state of someone else is to improve one's own karma, so you frequently find that an Indian village without a sannyasi will improve its lot by demanding that one be sent to it, so that the inhabitants may have the opportunity to do good. This is a far different outlook than that either of the Christian who gives only his tenth upon demand, or of the compulsive vow, such as that of Alfonso Enriques, who said that he would build the convent of Batalha if God gave him victory in battle, and so was somewhat reluctantly obligated to do so. Thus the Indian contributes to the existence of the sannyasi as, in Albigensian Provence, the laity contributed towards the maintenance of the ordained Catharist, not for their own good, but for his.

The sannyasi who has achieved his status through pabbajja does not, however, pose as a Yogi. There is the story of two brothers, one of whom had embraced yoga, but who kept it a secret from his sibling, who slept in the same room. One night during a lightning flash the sibling saw his brother doing exercises and asked him if

he had taken the vow of sitting up while sleeping. The brother denied it and lay down immediately, for it is better to break a vow than to feel or incur the pride of being observed in the pursuit of perfection. A vow can be resumed. But to appear greater than others is a flaw in one's karma for which one will later have to atone. It will keep one tied to the unreal, objectified world. Niyama is an exploratory stage of yoga; it is concerned with searching out the vanities of the self and learning how to remove them. To do so it is necessary to know all aspects of that vanity, and to step back from them as one does from the shore of the lake.

Another story tells of the student who went to a teacher and asked to be instructed in yoga. The teacher said he would instruct him in exchange for much gold. The student had no gold, and the teacher told him to go and return with it. The student spent twenty years amassing a fortune and then returned with it. When the sannyasi saw this laboriously accumulated wealth, he sent it rolling down the hill outside his hut, saying, "What would I do with so much wealth? I am a sannyasi. I have no use for wealth. If you have not learned anything of the solution to the problem of life while making that much wealth, I have nothing to teach you." In other words, the very experience of going deeply into life activities is also a form of yoga, for any activity on which we concentrate, if we concentrate on it with detachment, becomes a spiritual exercise. It will teach you that you are the onlooker of a play, not an actor in it, and thus produce detachment.

The third stage of yoga is Asana, the best known, since it deals with such visible things as posture. The various Asana postures are extremely difficult to assume, and require much preliminary training. Nor can you do them in any place or in any frame of mind. Concentration must be free of distraction. It must have the right surroundings, otherwise, though you may think you concentrate on the *Upanishads*, let us say, you merely read the words and not the meaning, an experience all of us have had while reading some difficult and unfamiliar text when we were too tired, even if we were alone and quiet.

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#### PLATE FIVE

A few typical examples of the 84 Asanas, as described in the *Hathayoga Pradipika* of Svatantran Swami.

मयूरासनम् १८



कुकुटासनम् २०



उष्ट्रासनम् २०



सर्पासनम् ३१



वाससा रुद्धोत्ती ३ इति रुद्धोत्ती भेदाः ३



जलचरमुद्रा ४





To perform any yoga exercise correctly, from the most elementary to the most complex, it is essential to have a retreat; some place to which group consciousness will not penetrate with its distractions. This retreat must be clean, both physically, for the sake of the body, and ritually, for the sake of the mind:

The practitioner should live alone in a small hermitage or monastery situated in a place free from rocks, water, and fire; of the extent of a bow's length and in a fertile country ruled over by a virtuous king where he will not be disturbed.

The hermitage should have a very small door, and should be without any windows; it should be level and without any holes; it should be neither too high nor too long. It should be very clean, being daily smeared over with cow dung, and should be free from all insects. Outside it should have a small corridor with a raised seat and a well, and the whole should be surrounded by a wall. These are the characteristics of a Yoga hermitage as laid down by those who have attained higher powers, who have practised Hatha-yoga.<sup>24</sup>

As for the postures of Asana, it is said that the God Siva, the first and greatest of Yogis, taught 8,400,000 separate positions, of which man remembers only 84. The first two of these are considered the most important. Siddha-Asana, or the perfect posture, involves sitting motionless and concentrating the activity of the senses by keeping the gaze fixed on the space between the eyebrows. So sitting, one presses the tip of one foot firmly against the perineum, laying the other foot against the generative organs, and setting the chin on the region of the heart. In constricting the lower part of the body, this position forces the chest upward and so frees it from the weight that it normally supports.

Padma-Asana, or the Lotus Posture, involves placing the back of the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot in the same way on the right thigh, grasping the two big toes firmly with the hands, laying the chin on the region of the heart, and contemplating the tip of the nose. It is supposed to do away with sickness and decline. It also has the effect of encysting the body within itself, where it can contemplate itself to more advantage than it can in its actions.

In addition, the Yogi should watch his diet:

Moderate diet is defined to mean taking pleasant and sweet food, leaving one-fourth of the stomach free, and offering up the act to Siva.

<sup>24</sup> *The Hatha-Yoga Pradipika*, p. 5.

The following things are considered as unsalutary to the Yogis: things that are sharp, sour, pungent, and hot, myrobalans, betel-nut and leaves, the ordinary conjee oil, sesamum, mustard, liquors, fish, flesh of animals like the goat, curds, buttermilk, gram, fruit of the jujube, oil-cakes, asafoetida and garlic.

Diet of the following nature should be avoided as being unhealthy: food that having been once cooked has grown cold and is heated again; that has an excess of salt and sourness; that is indigestible, and that has the leaves of the woody quassia mixed with it.<sup>25</sup>

These postures, difficult in themselves, are even more difficult for westerners. The Indian is accustomed to a life without chairs, and so sitting on the floor is for him a relaxing posture to begin with. It is something we outgrow however, as soon as we are big enough to be able to use furniture, and so it is not relaxing to us. The essential of these yoga exercises is to relax and to free the body from self-consciousness by freeing it from muscular tension. For us an analogous process would be to sit in a chair with flat armrests so that we can lean back comfortably and be quiet. Even this relaxation is not easy for us to practice. We have no discipline that has taught us how to relax; distractions fly across our minds like a flock of birds of ill-omen. You will also have trouble controlling your breath. If you try to sit in this position, you will discover more of the necessity of Hathayoga than by reading any amount of description. If we go into a museum and observe carefully the postures of antique sculpture, Greek, Egyptian, Chinese, or even Medieval western, and then try to assume the same postures ourselves, we make some remarkable discoveries and gain a more profound insight into civilizations of the past. For example, it is our habit to pray while kneeling, and kneeling is an act that relaxes the abdominal muscles and the system of neural ganglia that does so much to promote our feelings of anxiety and fear. But it was the habit of the Greeks to pray standing erect, the stomach muscles taut and controlled, and the whole body lifted up into an alert position by raising both arms, palm upward, towards the sun. This position also relieves pressure upon the abdominal neural ganglia, and thus helps avoid feelings of anxiety and doubt, making the body feel more outgoing.

The Yogi pays much attention to such postures and how to attain them. He will first situate himself in a position isolated enough to be free of mundane distraction and the works of man, even down

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., pp. 22-23.

to the materials of which his shelter is made and its size. He will endeavor to be comfortable, but not too comfortable. Also his retreat must be near a fresh spring, for the Yogi does not wish by dying of typhus or other diseases, to waste a life that, in the pursuit of salvation, has increased in value. Death would mean the waste of this lifetime and he would have to start all over again in his next incarnation, in order to achieve liberation from samsara.

Yoga texts tell us we must be careful where we meditate, for maximum ease and freedom from distraction is essential. Therefore one should choose one's hermitage in a well-run state, not too close to the frontier, for danger of war, and not too close to a high road, for fear of that person from Porlock who ruined Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*; and for fear of those who want information from you, when you have not yet received enough insight to give it. The place should be beautiful, and hence free from the distractions of ugliness; and the tree under which you sit should be sound and free from insect pests. There, once you have mastered your Asana postures, you will be able to advance to the next stage of yoga, which is Prana-yama, or breathing exercises.

Breathing exercises are important for two reasons. The metaphysical reason is that, in uttering constant prayer you are one with Brahma, and so, in a microcosm, reproduce the ceaseless breathing in and out with the world. The other reason is that unless the bodily apparatus is quieted and brought to a wide opening outward in breathing out, it is impossible to advance to any kind of higher concentration.

Many different breathing exercises are prescribed by the various schools of yoga, some emphasizing the inhalation, some the exhalation. Others say you must prolong the systole and diastole of the heart, for each man has so many breaths to take in this life, and if he take them quickly, his life is soon over; if he take them slowly, his life, in theory, is prolonged for hundreds of years, giving him more leisure to improve his karma. But others maintain that it is neither the intake nor the exhalation that is important, but the creative intermission between the two.

The Buddha however pushes all conflicting systems aside, in saying that the important aspect of Prana-yama is the consciousness that one is breathing this way or that; the detachment from the process

that is essential to life, rather than the actual method employed. Self-knowledge that derives from detachment is an essential tenet of Buddhism.

If you have mastered Prana-yama, then you progress to Pratyahara, which means the withdrawal of the senses from the world, for the senses allow the outer world to make inroads upon the inner one. They distract from concentration.

Let us say that by the first four stages of yoga you have succeeded in erasing the self to the condition of a flawless and empty white plate. The soul becomes a perfect circular disk. But as we contemplate it, our senses befog it with all sorts of figures and decorations and random intrusions. We are apt to recall that we forgot to mail a letter. These things must be cast aside. You must be able to be alone in yourself, and free of all distractions.

All processes with regard to the breath should be gone through with a mind concentrated on the subject. The wise man should not allow his mind to wander away during that time.

After making the mind supportless (by removing it from every object of conception) he should not think of anything. He certainly then remains like a pot filled inside and outside with world-space.

One should saturate the body from the head to the foot with the stream of nectar. He then becomes endowed with an excellent body, great strength and valor.

Place your spirit in the midst of the world-space and the world-space in the midst of your spirit; and on reducing everything to the form of world-space one must not think of anything else.

The Yogi in highest meditation is void within and without like a pot in the world-space. He is also, like a pot in the ocean, full within and without.

He should think of nothing in the outside nature; so also he should give up personal thoughts. He should abandon all thoughts subjective and objective.

The external universe is created by our thoughts, as also the imaginary world. Having abandoned the idea of permanency in these creations of thought, and concentrating your mind upon that which is not subject to any change, obtain everlasting and certain peace.

The mind, when concentrated on one's spirit, becomes one with it, like camphor with the flame, and like salt with the water of the ocean.

Everything that is seen and experienced is called the known, and the faculty of knowing is called the mind. When the known and the knowledge are lost there is no duality.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., pp. 72ff.

Through Yama, Niyama, Asana, Prana-yama, and Pratyahara we attain to the ability to concentrate. Concentration is only possible when all disturbing outside influences are removed, which is achieved by attitude, by posture, and by breathing. This ability to concentrate is Dharana. It is not an ultimate goal, but a preparatory one. Dharana is often achieved by the Kasina discipline of making as nearly as possible a perfect disk of earth, contemplating it, concentrating upon it, and being satisfied only when the temporal disk, which is imperfect because temporal, achieves its perfect state in the mind, not by floating in the mind's eye as a permanent symbolic image, but by becoming contiguous and coterminous with the mind. For this purpose one may use any such surface, say a lake. But the essential condition is that the ideal form remain existent even when the real form, or platonic embodiment, has been removed.

Once this condition has been achieved, one progresses to the seventh stage or Dhyana; a word usually translated as meditation. Dhyana however is meditation upon some specific doctrine, book, or religious idea. Dhyana as a term, in the migration of Buddhist doctrine to China, incidentally dropped the *a*, was pronounced as *chán*, and became, in Japan, Zen. Zen Buddhism is Dhyana Buddhism, or the seventh stage of Hathayoga practice. If Dharana provides the field of meditation, Dhyana is the process of being within that field.

The eighth stage of yoga is not really a stage, but the achievement of having reached the top. It is Samadhi; absorption, complete liberation in being capable of the utmost realization and therefore fulfillment.

When the mind becomes one with the object concentrated upon, this process is called Raja Yoga. The Yogi, being the master of creation and destruction, becomes the equal of the highest lord.

There are many who are merely Hatha Yogis without the knowledge of Raja Yoga. I think them to be simply practicers who do not get the fruit of their pains.

All the Hathayoga practices are only for the attainment of Raja Yoga. The man perfect in Raja Yoga deceives death.

A Yogi in highest meditation feels neither smell, taste, touch, sound, shape, nor color; he does not know himself and others.

A Yogi in Samadhi does not feel heat or cold, pain or pleasure, honor or disgrace.

A Yogi in Samadhi is invulnerable to all weapons; all the world cannot

overpower him; and he is beyond the powers of incantations and magical diagrams.<sup>27</sup>

Yoga can be likened to a ladder that reaches to the top of the roof. Once that is attained, the ladder becomes meaningless. It was only a means, not praised for its own sake, but prized for what it allowed us to accomplish. No man boasts of climbing a ladder. Thus the secrecy of the Yogis is explained. When he has reached the top, it no longer matters to him that he had to put much effort into getting there, so he does not boast of the effort. Those who attain ultimate peaks do not boast either.

No part of yoga therefore has any but a transitory meaning. No method ever does have a meaning, but only a use. So a constant exhortation in yoga texts is that one should not get stuck in the middle of the road; or otherwise, that a finger pointing at the moon is valuable only so long as the moon has not been glimpsed. One must never worship the means. One should forget them. The goal makes them unimportant, both as we make use of them, and after we have made use of them.

But what is this goal, which is called Samadhi? Briefly we may define it as the complete and steady realization of the atman that is one with Brahman in its condition of so being, rather than in our knowledge that it is so.

Outwardly the condition of the Samadhi may assume various guises. You may see the Yogi who sits absorbed in it, being fed by the hands of blissful devotees, as they sit by the side of some river surrounding the master, who is in a state of trance, no longer participating in active life. There is also such a man as Svami Sivananda of Rsikesh who has attained Samadhi, but who works busily from dawn until night as President of the Yoga Vedanta Forest University. He has published thus far 175 books; he runs five magazines, most of which he writes himself; he maintains an elaborate correspondence and an ashram with dozens of devotees. He runs a hospital. He plays the vina beautifully and sings at prayer meetings. In short, though the attainment of insight is difficult, maintenance of it, once it has been attained, is not, for all things that might seem to hamper it hamper it no longer. One can do everything or nothing. Svami Sivananda has his parallel among us

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 94ff.



in the career of Dr. Albert Schweitzer. A mind that is liberated from itself can perform the functions of the self more accurately and diversely than can the engaged self, for it is no longer impeded by its own nature.

Samadhi is traditionally distinguished into two stages, the Samadhi connected with consciousness, and that no longer connected with consciousness. The Yogi who knows that he has attained realization of the Brahman and atman has not attained it, because it is his "me" that knows this, and therefore, since the "me" is capable of knowing it, then he is not completely free of his "me." Only when his consciousness or awareness of having achieved realization disappears completely, has he done so. Therefore the state of Samadhi is something we can know only before we know it. For after we experience it, we cease to know it, knowledge being limited to objective experience and our objective conclusions about subjective experience.

The ancient Samkhya philosophy, ascribed to Kapila, describes this ultimate stage of Samadhi in a picturesque way. To Samkhya philosophy, the atman is the eternal spectator at a play. It sees the play but does not and cannot act in it. The players in the play, the shadows of the divine, can act, but cannot see.

Or yet again, a blind man and a lame man meet in a forest. They complain that they are lost for good, for though the lame man can see, he cannot walk; and though the blind man can walk, he cannot see. The two men make a treaty, the blind man carries the lame man, the one directing, the other impelling, so that both may be rescued. Such is the dualism involved in the pursuit of the atman. It alone knows the way out of the wood; but, sitting in the body, it also saves the body from the wood. The two are interdependent, another reason why asceticism finds no approbation in Indian philosophy, but only in fanatic sects.

There must be, in other words, co-operation between the seer and the seen, the subjective and objective world; the atman and matter are interdependent, and lost without each other. But when finally the soul realizes that it is not on the stage, but in the audience, then the play can stop; the spectator can say, "I have seen it," and he will leave it.

Since this state can be achieved, we may ask, as does a Samkhya text, whether, when the Yogi achieves the highest stage of detach-

ment and liberation, he should not cease to exist any longer. The answer given is no. One may be alive while liberated, in a state of saintliness on earth. This condition is explained with the example of the potter's wheel. The potter shapes his pot perfectly and stops pedaling the wheel, but after he has gone, the wheel continues to turn for awhile of its own momentum. It has ceased to produce pots, but it continues to revolve. So the Yogi who has achieved Samadhi continues his secular existence out of sheer momentum, though no new karma will thereby be produced. His karma is as finished as is the pot the potter used the wheel to shape and then took away, while the wheel went on spinning. You are thus free, if you are a Yogi in the Samadhi state, of the wheel of samsara. You will not be reincarnated again.

Samkhya philosophy is dualistic, seeing matter and spirit as independent though interdependent. Vedanta philosophy, equally old, is monistic. Vedanta feels that Brahma is not only the only reality, but all reality. Anything else is unreal. The great Vedanta philosopher Sankara, who lived around 800 A.D., made that very clear, for his system begins, "Brahma is real; the world is not real." Insofar as reality is the inhalation and exhalation of Brahma, nothing else exists but Brahma. So the system is monistic. It thus sees the relation between the atman and the "me" in a particular way.

The vagueness of Indian dates makes the historic placement of Sankara difficult. Radhakrishnan says he lived from 788-820 A.D. Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda date his birth around 686 A.D. Whatever the truth may be, it is certain that he was a child prodigy, that he died at the age of thirty-two in the Himalayas, and that he was a major reformer, being chiefly responsible for the monastic system as it exists in India today. His literary output was enormous and he founded ten monastic orders. He lived at a period when Buddhism was widespread but decadent, and Hinduism was beginning to revive and fight back. He probably had much to do with the suppression of Buddhism that resulted. World-appearance, says Sankara, may be likened to an imagined snake that proves, on closer inspection, to be a coil of rope. When we are no longer deluded by appearances, the snake aspect vanishes into the reality of the rope, as the world vanishes into Brahman. Sankara denies the ultimate reality of the world of thought and matter. These things are misreadings of Brahman and nothing more. This interpretation

does not mean that the phenomenal world does not exist. It exists for those who have not been united with Brahman. But once they have been united with Brahman, then the phenomenal world ceases to exist for them. It is as though the world were a dream. When we wake, in this case to higher reality or Brahman, then the dreams cease. The apparent world is called *Maya*. Sankara claims that the universe is superimposed upon Brahman, for we see Brahman in terms of the universe. It is as though we were looking at something through milk glass. The true relation between Brahman and *Maya* is unknowable and indefinable.

Both Vedanta and the philosophy of which yoga is the discipline share the same Indian worldview, though they see it in different ways.

That worldview embraces karma and samsara, and is devoted to releasing the Self from the endless cycle of rebirth by realization that the atman is one with Brahman. This general systematic conviction underlies all Indian religions or philosophies, including Buddhism, but excluding the Moslem portion of the population that is an accident of conquest.

A person who has attained a state of what we would call bliss, is called a *jivanmukta*, from *mukta*, saved or redeemed; and *jiva*, living. The *jivanmukta* is the one who has attained the highest insight, but who is yet still living.

Many Indian Rsis have asked how long a man can still remain alive in his body, once he has obtained this higher enlightenment. The question, as we have already seen, has been answered in many ways. Some have said that the body survives the realization of Oneness only for a minute. Some have limited temporal endurance to exactly forty days; and others would extend the period for an indefinite number of years. Swami Hariharananda Baba, of Benares, perhaps because of his extremely aged appearance, is believed to have been in the state of *Samadhi* for more than a hundred years. The time allowed varies. It is interesting, in this connection, to remember that some Polynesians claim to be able to will their own death when they feel that their life is complete, a thing they do not out of sorrow or joy, but because it seems to them suitable.

However long he survives the moment of enlightenment, the outer appearance of the *jivanmukta* is one of a powerful everspreading

peacefulness by means of which he transforms the nature of those around him into something luminous and potent.

Relinquishing attachment to illusory external happiness, the Self-abiding jivanmukta, satisfied with the Bliss derived from Atman, shines inwardly, like a lamp placed inside a jar.<sup>28</sup>

It would seem that the Indian ethical systems were based less upon an abstract ideal, as with us, than upon the observation of the character of the jivanmukta and of his habits of life:

A jivanmukta transcends the scriptures and social conventions. He is beyond the imperatives of ethics. Yet he cannot do anything that is not good and not conducive to the welfare of others. . . . After the realization of Brahman he becomes free but not whimsical, spontaneous but not given to license. He is totally unobstructed in his action and thought; yet he never makes a false step or sets a bad example to others. . . . A jivanmukta alone knows the true meaning of Freedom and enjoys it. He is free from all bondage imposed on men by the world. . . . He roams in the avenue of Vedanta, and his pastime is in the Supreme Brahman. He may wear no outer marks of holiness; he enjoys without attachment, like a child, the sense-objects offered by others. Free from desires, he enjoys material objects but never forgets his omnipotent Divine Self. . . . Sometimes a fool, sometimes a sage, sometimes possessed of regal splendour; sometimes wandering, sometimes behaving like a motionless python, which waits for its food to come to it; sometimes wearing a benign expression, sometimes honoured, sometimes insulted, sometimes unknown—thus lives the man of realization, ever happy in the Knowledge of Brahman.<sup>29</sup>

This passage brings up the problem of the place of ethics in a religion. Of course there are moral systems unconnected to any faith; yet religion, in trying to bring the conduct of man into conformity with the ideal, is bound to display certain ethical precepts. And ethical systems, which also pursue an ideal, are non-religious only insofar as they refuse to be so. Non-religious ethical systems try to make conduct conform to an ideal. But religious systems say we may come into contact or union with *the* Ideal only by giving up attachment to the worldly concerns of which the ethical ideal is one. Within their own definitions of themselves, ethical systems are systems based purely on behaviorism, either existent or to be de-

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit., Section 51.

<sup>29</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, *Self Knowledge (Atmabodha)* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1946), pp. 112-113.

sired, and are concerned with the best functioning of the social animal within the social complex. They are efficient and sometimes excellent, but they disclaim any connection whatsoever with religion, and have none, chiefly because they are unconcerned with religious values. At the same time, when a religion has hardened into a cult and ritual, it either influences ethics or produces one, since it is to its interest to govern the behavior of its flock.

Most of man's ethical systems are connected with man's religions, and the connection is a two-fold one, being either a preparation for the higher state, by purification of the self, or else the result of the higher state, which purifies the self automatically. It is a tenet of most religions that only by restraint and self-knowledge can man attain to higher realization, and that the effort is in itself commendable, if only insofar as it wipes away what is gross. That is the ethic of preparation, ethics not as a practical sociological device, but as the initial condition of spiritual improvement. This type of moral consideration is to be found in the initial Yama and Niyama stages of yoga, which demand self-control as a preliminary to realization of the higher Self.

An entirely different and opposed ethic is involved in the way of life of the *jivanmukta*, who, because he has attained enlightenment, is incapable of behaving in an unrestrained or amoral way. One system works upward; the other down. So the enlightenment of the *jivanmukta* might be said to reveal an ethical system, were it not for the fact that he has passed beyond the realm of the temporal, to which ethics are considered to apply, and is moral not because he prefers to be moral, but because he is incapable of immorality. He produces, in those who observe his actions, what might be called an aping of the saints, the simulacrum, not the essence, of goodness. This reaction is mere imitation, and accomplishes nothing but an outward appearance. Thus the *jivanmukta*, unless he is extremely careful, is in danger, while he remains in his earthly self, of encouraging in others not the good, but only the appearance of the good. He may thus actually hinder others from realizing their own *atman*. This danger is another reason why he should not reveal himself in his state of realization, and why the guru is unwilling to accept any but those pupils who are sincere in their desire for self-realization.

In any event, we perceive that ethics may have two points of

contact with religion, first, as a preparatory state, and second, as a derivative state, so that the two are endlessly interwoven.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, a work universally studied in India, presents us with the ethical dilemma in terms of a battle, and is the advice of the god Krishna to the hero Arjuna. The work is a composite of many traditions, containing, besides the prescriptions of yoga, of Vedanta philosophy, and of Samkhya, a virtual textbook on ethics. The major problem of the *Gita* is the moral problem of how we are to govern our actions. The battlefield of Kurukshetra is envisioned as a symbol of the moral battlefield of man, and Arjuna cannot bring himself to engage upon this battle. Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, urges him and persuades him to do so.

First, Arjuna cannot fight because he cannot bring himself to do so. Second, he will contract sin, or a bad karma, if he does so. Third, he will endanger not only his own karma, but that of all those whom he may slay, by forcing them into a next incarnation while they are still burdened with the unresolved consequences of their present one.

But Krishna says to Arjuna:

Man winneth not freedom from action by abstaining from activity, nor by mere renunciation doth he rise to perfection. Nor can any one, even for an instant, remain really actionless; for helplessly is every one driven to action by the qualities born of nature. Who sitteth, controlling the organs of action, but dwelling in his mind on the objects of the senses, that bewildered man is called a hypocrite. But who, controlling the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, with the organs of action without attachment, performeth yoga by action, he is worthy. Perform thou right action, for action is superior to inaction, and inactive, even the maintenance of thy body would not be possible.

The world is bound by action, unless performed for the sake of sacrifice; for that sake, free from attachment, O son of Kunti, perform thou action. Having in ancient times emanated mankind together with sacrifice, the lord of emanation said: "By this shall ye propagate; be this to you the giver of desires; with this nourish ye the shining ones, and may the shining ones nourish you; thus nourishing one another, ye shall reap the supremest good. For nourished by sacrifice, the shining ones shall bestow on you the enjoyments you desire." A thief verily is he who enjoyeth what is given by them without returning them aught. The righteous, who eat the remains of the sacrifice, are freed from all sins; but the impious, who dress food for their own sakes, they verily eat sin. From food creatures become; from rain is the production of food; rain proceedeth from sacrifice; sacrifice ariseth out of action. Know thou that from Brahma action



groweth, and Brahma from the Imperishable cometh. Therefore the ETERNAL, the all-permeating, is ever present in sacrifice.

He who on earth doth not follow the wheel thus revolving, sinful of life and rejoicing in the senses, he, O son of Pritha, liveth in vain. But the man who rejoiceth in the SELF with the SELF is satisfied, and is content in the SELF, for him verily there is nothing to do; for him there is no interest in things done in this world, nor any in things not done, nor doth any object of his depend on any being. Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform action which is duty, for, by performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the Supreme.

Whatsoever a great man doeth, that other men also do; the standard he setteth up, by that the people go. Let no wise man unsettle the mind of ignorant people attached to action; but acting in harmony with me let him render all action attractive.

All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. The self, deluded by egoism, thinketh: "I am the doer." But he, O mighty-armed, who knoweth the essence of the divisions of the qualities and functions, holding that "the qualities move amid the qualities," is not attached. Those deluded by the qualities of nature are attached to the functions of the qualities. The man of perfect knowledge should not unsettle the foolish whose knowledge is imperfect. Surrendering all actions to me, with thy thoughts resting on the supreme SELF, from hope and egoism freed, and of mental fever cured, engage in battle.

Who abide ever in this teaching of mine, full of faith and free from cavilling, they too are released from actions. Who carp at my teaching and act not thereon, senseless, deluded in all knowledge, know thou these mindless ones as fated to be destroyed.

Even the man of knowledge behaves in conformity with his own nature; beings follow nature; what shall restraint avail? Affection and aversion for the objects of sense abide in the senses; let none come under the dominion of these two; they are obstructors of the path. Better one's own duty though destitute of merit, than the duty of another, well-discharged. Better death in the discharge of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger."

Arjuna said, "But dragged on by what does a man commit sin, reluctantly indeed, O Varshneya, as it were by force constrained?"

The Blessed Lord said: "It is desire, it is wrath, begotten by the quality of motion; all-consuming, all-polluting, know thou this as our foe here on earth. As a flame is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo is wrapped by the amnion, so this is enveloped by it. Enveloped is wisdom by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of desire, which is insatiable as a flame.

The senses, the mind and the reason are said to be its seat; by these enveloping wisdom it bewilders the dweller in the body. Therefore, O best of the Bharatas, mastering first the senses, do thou slay this thing of sin, destructive of wisdom and knowledge. It is said that the senses are

great; greater than the senses is the mind: greater than the mind is the reason; but what is greater than the reason, is HE.

Thus understanding him as greater than the reason, restraining the self by the SELF, slay thou, O mighty-armed, the enemy in the form of desire, difficult to overcome."<sup>30</sup>

This is the law of action. Sri Krishna teaches that men should neither engage wholly in karma, nor in akarma. For one thing, inactivity is impossible, and so it is a negation of being. Any action we avoid thus becomes by our avoidance of it a negative action. If you abstain from going to the polls to vote, statistically you enhance the majority party, so that even in abstention you act. akarma is impossible. To achieve akarma you would have to stop living, and since you will immediately be reborn if you do, that is in itself impossible.

Karma in any event is usually practiced for the sake of its fruits. Men go into action because they crave the results of action. Such motivation is ignoble, because it prevents one from escaping from samsara. You may be able to achieve a higher incarnation and become a temporary deva, but there is no rescue from samsara in that. Unless you are ultimately purified your fall from a higher incarnation is inevitable. To attain a higher incarnation, even as a deva, merely because it is agreeable, is in itself a moral flaw that will eventually project you back into a lower form of incarnation. You can escape from samsara and from guilt only by abolishing the possibility of guilt, not by merely increasing your capacity for good.

Thus Sri Krishna provides his answer to the ethical problem of what is the right kind of behavior by saying, somewhat in the manner of Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, that we must "act in such a way that you in your action neither crave for nor are aware of any fruits that in future may come out of it." That you give the whole essence of your action as a sacrifice to the ultimate, or Brahma, and so totally disappear from your own actions.

This third sort of action, beyond karma and akarma, is called Nishkama Karma, the abolition of any craving for rewarded action. Nishkama Karma, free action that is done in abandonment to the

<sup>30</sup> Annie Besant, trans., *The Bhagavad-Gita, or The Lord's Song* (Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Press, 1929), pp. 58-75.

moment, without thought that it will improve or damage us, is the most meritorious of actions, the gratuitous good. In terms of time it may be expressed by saying, do not flee from reality or from your true Self by placing yourself in the future that will never come. Your Self exists in past, present, and future, and you are self-responsible at all times, for the moral issue is an eternal now. To put off decisions until tomorrow, or to avoid decisions in this manner, which is itself a decision, is to shirk one's responsibility to one's self. Many people act in this way. They are adjusted to a future event, and so are always engaged upon a wild goose chase after themselves. Such people live in the future, which does not exist, and so do not live at all. And there are those, particularly the old, who have survived their social function, who live in the past, dragging around with them a long rope of excuses and explanations. They evade responsibility by consoling themselves that their decisions are already made, but since these decisions no longer exist, then in the present they shirk responsibility for their own actions.

How, then, should we live in the present? We can do so only by accepting all of the present, and thus removing it neither to the future nor to the past. Even to think of causes and effects is to flee from the immediacy of any moral issue. Thus the *jivanmukta*, who exists liberated from *samsara*, can neither build up any future karma, nor is he forced to expiate any previous karma, for his karma exists in a total present. His end and his beginning are coterminous.

Of course the potter's wheel that is his temporal existence may still revolve from momentum, but nothing more is produced:

A liberated soul lives in the body as long as the momentum of the past actions that have produced it endures. The man may remain outwardly inactive, blessing the world with his compassionate thought, or he may engage in various actions for the good of all; but nothing he does can ever be contrary to Truth or Knowledge. He dwells in the physical body and may experience disease, old age, and decay, which are the characteristics of all material forms. Possessed of sense-organs, he may be blind, deaf, or deformed in other ways. He may feel hunger or thirst or may appear to be a victim of grief and sorrow. Nevertheless, though experiencing all of these momentarily—the characteristics of the body, of the senses, and of the mind—he is never overwhelmed by them. Having once realized their nothingness, he never imagines them to be real. Any man

who knows that what he is seeing is magic does not consider it to be real; yet he enjoys the performance to his heart's content.<sup>31</sup>

Thus his temporal existence becomes a sacrificial action and is called Instrumental Activity. He knows, while he is acting in the moment, that he is not the doer, actor, or writer, but that things are done, enacted, and written through him. Such is the experience of artists who, in the process of artistic activity exist outside time, or rather, are themselves abolished, and become conscious again to find the thing done that, while they were doing it, they had no consciousness of. It is the nature of creative activity that the self is absent during its performance. Thus Mme Guyon: "Before writing I did not know what I was going to write; while writing I saw that I was writing things I had never known."<sup>32</sup> The experience is virtually universal. The artist is operative only when he loses all consciousness of himself. And equally our moral actions become pure moral actions only when we are no longer temporally concerned in their effect on ourselves.

Such activity is called *svadharma*, the absolute fulfillment of the self in itself, or in its actions, which, being in the present, have neither previous connotations nor consequences. For if the action is to be judged only in relation to other actions, then we can never know its inner nature, but only its outer aspect, and thus we can never realize it.

Such conduct, which seems to take no heed to consequences either to one's self or to others, is misunderstood in the West as an act of selfishness. Such is the error of otherwise very great and fine men in their misleading books on Indian philosophy, a subject with which they are but passingly conversant. For yoga is not selfishness, since it exists in a worldview wherein salvation of the self is a personal matter and wherein the highest act one can perform is to preserve the aspect of the self that is in contact with the Divine, not by punishing or denying the temporal self, but by casting it off.

That such an activity is not seen to be selfish is illustrated in another chapter of the Mahabharata epic, of which the *Bhagavad-Gita* is but a part, in the section dealing with Savitri. Savitri was

<sup>31</sup> Nikhilananda, *Self-Knowledge*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>32</sup> Mme Guyon (Jeanne Marie Bouvières de la Mothe), *Autobiography* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1897), p. 90.

the daughter of a monarch who had no other children. He lavished all his affection on Savitri and almost spoiled her. When she was fifteen and of age to marry, he decided to give her the supreme gift one may give a daughter, one which occurs only about a dozen times in Indian history, the right to choose her own husband. He equipped her with a caravan and sent her to travel for a year in search of the man of her choice. When her return was announced, the King took his seat on his throne with his court adviser, a Brahmin who was the real ruling power in the kingdom, hovering behind his chair. Savitri prostrated herself at the feet of her father, and in answer to his question told him that she had found her husband. He was a raja, of the same caste as Savitri and her father, but he had to spend the rest of his days in exile. He spent his time caring for his two old parents, both blind, and his name was Satyavan: he who has true being.

The Brahmin said the marriage could not be, for the stars said that Satyavan would die within a year. Since for a daughter to be a widow is the worst fate that can befall her in Hindu society, such a marriage was unthinkable. Savitri replied that she had made her choice, and that a woman chose only once, whether the person to whom she gave her heart lived a hundred years or a day.

The king told the Brahmin that Savitri had made up her mind. To make up one's mind is in India a final and irrevocable act. You are not urged, in India, to take more food after you have refused a second helping once, for you have involved your karma as soon as you make a choice, and so choice is unchangeable.

Savitri went to join her chosen husband, Satyavan, and lived with him and with her old parents-in-law in the woods, it being the supreme duty of every wife to serve her in-laws. She was the first to rise in the morning, the last to lie down at night; she took care of the blind father and mother-in-law; and when Satyavan's year of life had but two weeks to run, she began to fast. She neither ate nor slept. During the last three days she looked very pale. When Satyavan's last morning arrived, she left the house and was greeted by a hermit, who used the usual formula of morning greeting to a married woman, which was, "May thou never become a widow." Savitri knew very well she was to be widowed.

She then asked Satyavan if she might accompany him into the jungle, where he was going to hunt game and gather fuel. He was

upset and said that a tender woman could not go into the jungle, which was a dangerous place, and that besides, she would have to ask permission of his parents.

This Savitri did, and her wish was granted, for the blind father said that since she had always been the first to rise and the last to sleep, and had served them faithfully, and since this was the only time she had asked a favor, it should be granted.

So she and Satyavan went into the forest, with their arms entwined about each other. He explained to her all the things she had never seen before, the birds she had never heard, the flowers she had never before glimpsed. Satyavan chopped wood and she sat watching him. At noon he began to feel unwell and decided to rest. He lay with his head in her lap and she caressed his hair while he closed his eyes. Then, behind a tree, she saw a gray figure standing with a noose in his hand. It was Yama, Lord of Death, who said, "Yes, Savitri, I have come myself; I have not sent one of my messengers, but have honored you by coming myself to take the purusha, or soul, of your husband away with me." He cast his lasso, caught the soul of Satyavan, threw it on his back, and began to walk away.

Automatically, in her devotion to her husband, Savitri followed Yama. After a while he turned to her and said, "But you know that you cannot walk with me into the realm of death, for your hour has not yet come. You must return to the living; that is your duty."

If she must go back alone, Savitri thought, at least Yama might grant that Satyavan's father might have his eyesight back again. This wish Yama granted and continued on his way. In her thoughts Savitri still followed him.

After some time Yama turned to her with a smile and said, "I must reproach you—your duty is with the dead body; you must see to the funeral rituals; that is the duty of a wife." She answered that the duty of a wife was to be the shadow of her husband. Where he went, she would go.

Yama insisted that she turn back, and offered her one more boon, as a reward for faithfulness, though this boon must not be anything impossible. Savitri said that when Satyavan's father had his sight restored, he would still be in his hermitage, and thus miserable, so she wished Yama to restore to him his kingdom, for both the parents and Satyavan were in exile. This wish Yama also granted, but told her to turn back and to leave him alone.



Yama walked on and came to a precipice where the way turned down towards the underworld. He realized there was still a step behind him. This time he told Savitri that even if she wanted to, she could not follow him any farther. She could not cross the borderline into death. But, moved by her faithfulness, he granted her a third boon, which must still be nothing impossible.

Savitri said that Satyavan's father, even with his eyesight and kingdom restored, would still be in the plight of her own father, in having no progeny who could inherit the kingdom. She asked that Satyavan's father might therefore have offspring. Yama put down his burden and said: "I cannot endure your demands any longer, for how can Satyavan's father have children unless you bear the children of Satyavan, who is an only son? Therefore, take back your husband. You have gained him by the trickery of asking round-about boons, while asking nothing for yourself." In other words, if you collect benefits for a cause, you may gain much; if you collect them for yourself, you gain nothing.

So Savitri went back to the glade, sat down once more, and took Satyavan's head upon her lap. He opened his eyes while she caressed his hair and said, "I had a terrible dream. I saw a man with a noose coming." She soothed him and told him to relax a while longer and to tell her his dream later. He relaxed, but towards evening he began to worry about his father. She told him she thought his father was all right by now, but that perhaps they should return. So they went home, and the evening twilight witnessed Savitri's undying love.

Whether this elaborate story is designed as a parable, or has been glossed as one, as seems more probable, does not greatly matter. What does matter is that it explains both the nature and the outcome of the gratuitous act. This gratuitous act is not in any sense the "*acte gratuit*" of the existentialists. Savitri saves her higher self, Satyavan, by purging her desires of any selfishness. In so doing, she also improves the lot of others, not deliberately, but because in purging her own being of selfish motives, she restores that being to its proper function, by opening its eyes, which were blinded, so that, freed of blinding self-interest, they may once more see clearly.

Thus the Yogi is not selfish in removing himself from the theater of temporal events and lower responsibility, for he abolishes the self only in order to achieve the higher responsibility that is union

with Brahman. So it is one of the major doctrines of the *Bhagavad-Gita* not to be blind to the Miracle of Being, but open to it, in an endless present; to indulge in instrumental activity; to be a tool in the hands of the Divine world guidance, rather than to crave for any particular goal or purpose. In this sense purposeless actions, that is, actions unmotivated by personal desire, are the most deeply fulfilling of actions. The process is valuable, not the result.

Thus on one hand, the same moral insight, at different levels, allows Walt Whitman to say that "Battles are lost in the same spirit in which they are won," and animates the story of the Caliph Omar who was spat on by an adversary with whom he was fighting. The Caliph left the fight, saying, "I shall continue this fight tomorrow, for if I continue today I will have fought in wrath and fury."

The objection to the gratuitous act, or instrumental activity, is that to us it might seem harmful to others. To this problem there are several answers. One is based upon the idea of karma. If one believes in karma, then one can hardly be concerned with the outcome of one's actions as that outcome may afflict others. For if others suffer, it is because their karma demands that some evil be done to them in exact return for some evil they had previously, in some other incarnation perhaps, committed. Such is the typical answer an Indian would give to the moral aspects of instrumental activity.

We must always remember that the ethical content of various moral and religious institutions is governed by the society in which each institution arose, not by our view of it; and conversely, we cannot question or accept an alien moral system merely because it has different social roots than does our own. Thus those in the West who accept Indian philosophy inevitably do so more in protest against their own social system, than as a solution of its problems.

Apart from the doctrine of karma, the morality of instrumental acts may be explained in quite another way, by examining the nature of the ego. For as we forget about rewards and punishments, so do we forget the desires of the ego, and our acts therefore become more in conformity with disinterested standards. If an act is beyond the desires or limits of the ego, then it cannot effect the ego of others, since it does not take place on the plane of personal relationships. Egoless activities do not in themselves produce evil effects, for in being free of personality goals, they are amoral. Thus

the *jivanmukta* is no longer projected into the aspect of the "I" that is the personal ego, or self.

Insofar as your acts are amoral, you are absolved of any moral responsibility for their consequences. The Indian will go so far as to say that a good actor ought to be able to play with joy and devotion any part that the stage director will tell him to play. The best actor is not he who rejects evil parts, saying he will play only nice people. It would be a poor actor who, playing a ruthless part, would endeavor to insinuate that he was nicer either than the part or the author of the play.

Such a notion is to western standards unacceptable. We feel morally responsible for the nature of our role in life. The Indian is not responsible for his role in this way, but only insofar as it is the result of a previous karma. He is responsible only for the excellence with which he performs his part, not for the part itself, for he cannot change the part, which karma has dictated, in his present incarnation. In many ways such an outlook coincides with the findings of modern psychology, which teaches that you must not overcome your weaknesses and complexes, since you cannot do so, but rather learn to live with them as things that become evil only in being self-consciously or egocentrically expressed.

Such is the moral view of the earlier history of Hinduism. But "Hinduism" is a modern term for a modern condition. It can scarcely be said to apply to the ancient texts of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, or to the systems of Vedanta, Samkhya, and Yoga. "Hinduism" is usually applied to Indian society as it struggled to recover from the onslaught of Mohammedans and Mohammedanism that disrupted Indian life from the 10th until the 16th or 17th century, A.D., brought Islam to India.

Another point where Hindu and Moslem traditions met, clashed, and influenced each other was in art. The iconography and popular literature of Hinduism is vast. Though the source of most modern religions is inspirational and personal, the structure that such insight gives rise to must also be considered as a social phenomenon. To make its doctrines intelligible and to give them currency among the laity, each faith makes use both of sacerdotal architecture and of folk literature. Thus we have in Christianity the Golden Legend, in Buddhism, the Jataka tales, and in Hinduism the *Puranas* and the *Panchatantra*. Most of the followers of any religion are illiter-

ate, and story telling is the best means of conveying the religious message to them in fabular or parable form. The story teller goes from village to village, throughout the 1,400,000 villages of India, and is a teacher of the masses. Any doctrine can be conveyed more swiftly by story than by abstract principles. Thus the introduction of the *Panchatantra* tells us that there was once a maharaja whose sons were stupid. The best teachers could do nothing with them. Finally a learned brahmin was offered the income of forty towns to teach them at least enough so that they might be able to get through life. Being a sannyasi, the brahmin refused the gift, but said that if he failed the raja might kick him; if he succeeded, he might be spared the mistreatment as a reward. Such then is the origin of the *Panchatantra*, which contains the stories by which the brahmin taught the sons of the raja. Or so we are told.

For instance, there is the story of the terrible Yogi who through long meditation had achieved enormous power, but had become proud. He flew through the air to visit Vishnu and demanded entrance, because of his importance, at once. The gatekeeper refused, whereupon the Yogi condemned the gatekeeper to be reborn as a lowly creature by forcing him to break his duty, in brushing him aside. After the visit the gatekeeper went to Vishnu, saying that this was not fair and asking that his karma be changed. Even Vishnu could not change the will of a great Yogi; at most he could ameliorate the next incarnation of the gatekeeper by cutting it short. He gave the gatekeeper the choice of two incarnations, one in which he would hate Vishnu, the other in which he would adore him. He advised him to take the hateful incarnation, for if he returned worshipping Vishnu, it would take him five incarnations to return to Vishnu, love being intermittent, whereas if he chose the hateful incarnation, he would return in one, since those we hate we think about more than those we love. The parable means that it is not the nicety of our thoughts of the Divine that save us, but their constancy and total absorption.

Another such tale deals with Krishna, the most beloved avatar of Vishnu, and the god of love. When Krishna, as a child, stole some food and was caught, he always threw the blame on someone else. He dawdled with shepherdesses, of whom he was fond: all the souls of men are shepherdesses. They adore Krishna and he them. Once the shepherdesses wanted to cross the Ganges in order to take

an offering to a great Yogi on the other side. They asked Krishna how they might cross. Krishna said that was simple, they could cross merely by saying, "Surely as our Lord Krishna has always been completely faithful to his one and only Radha, his wife, so truly shalt thou, Ganges river, now divide your floods and let us go through." The Gopis, or shepherdesses, were worried at this, for they knew it was not true. Krishna was notoriously unfaithful to his wife. However they repeated what he had told them and the river divided to let them pass. They made their offering of fruit to the Yogi, who gorged himself, and then they asked him how they might return. He said it was simple, that they had only to say, "Ganga, as truly as the great Yogi has never broken his vow of fasting, please divide and let us go through." The Gopis knew this was not true, having watched the Yogi gorge himself, but they followed his advice. The river Ganges opened and let them through. The meaning of such a tale we may ponder as we wish, but at least we see that Hindu folklore, and indeed iconography, sees no harm in being both solemn and playful about serious matters, even at the same time.

When we turn to concrete works of art, we are dealing with a sophisticated and symbolic form of expression. By their works shall ye know them, is a valid exhortation, even in the aesthetic sense in which it was not originally meant. It is a curious fact that the oriental mind creates buildings that are essentially monumental rather than functional: its temples are symbolic objects rather than areas planned for the shelter of specific acts, and it is also curious that the western mind is roughly the opposite; the first producing, as its basic religious architectural form, the stupa; the second, the basilica.

It is an ancient Indian theory that art did not exist in Heaven among the devas, and that it does not exist in the lowest types of animal life; or, to view the matter historically, that art did not yet exist in the golden age, when everything was perfect and therefore needed no symbolic expression. Nor is art going to exist in the Iron Age, when life will have so deteriorated that man will be incapable even of symbolic expression. Art, to the Indian, typifies the Silver Age between these two extremes, when man, though not quite sure of a perfection he has lost, has not yet fallen so far

as to be incapable of perceiving it. According to Indian aesthetics, all the arts try to express the direct shape of the ideas causal to creation of which, in this life, we can see only the shadows. No art, therefore, can be considered great that only dabbles with appearances; but art becomes great when it tries to see beyond appearances and when it becomes what we should call contemplative.

Therefore to the Indian all chanting, poetry, and quoting of great formulae is but the shadow of a weak repetition of the creative voice of Brahma who breathed out the world by uttering it. All dancing and movement is similarly a weak imitation of the dance of Vishnu, who created this world by stepping on it, so that all matter bears his imprint, so that even artistic activity is only a pale reflection of Vishnu's claim to the world.

With such a worldview, it is easy to see why art is very definitely linked both to Yoga and other spiritual disciplines in India. Indeed, most of the architecture, sculpture, painting, dancing and music, is an outgrowth of certain stages of meditation and Yoga concentration, without which they would not exist.

For example, consider the basic shape of a Hindu temple. It always has a rectangular base, which is taken to be a simulacrum of the fundamental region of Man's body. The temple, which is identical in shape with the world as a whole, is identical therefore with Man, the world being in the shape of man, so that the temple gives us both the microcosm of man and the macrocosm of the cosmos. This rectangle, which is conceived to be yellow, is the base of every temple structure and is at the same time symbolic of the earth element. Even the Greek atomists claimed that the earth consisted of square atoms, and that the reason why it was so hard to dig the ground was that these square atoms jammed against each other, preventing movement. The square of the earth is yellow, and that is also the color caste sign of the vaishya, originally the toiler caste, the man who works the earth.

Upon the square is imposed a ball, thought to be made of the round atoms of water, lighter than earth, and green in color. Water was conceived to be circular or globular, because a sphere moves easily, and the atoms of water poured easily. Thus the Greek atomists, as well as the Hindus, believed. Water also represented the viscera of man, the moist intestines where the treasures of the ocean



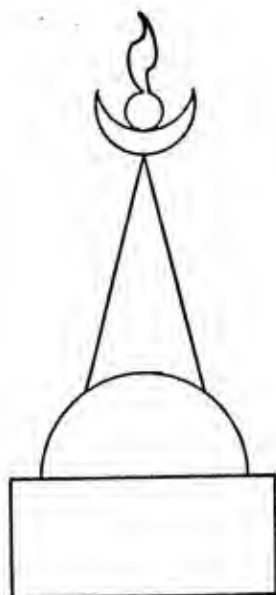


PLATE SIX

The basic pattern of the Hindu temple, as well as of the similar Buddhist stupa or relic container, is explained from the bottom upwards. The lowest part, the base, a yellow cube, represents the element earth; next the assembly hall, a green ball, symbolizes the water element; the spire, cone-shaped, red, and pointing upwards, represents fire; the half-moon, bowl-like white top stands for the element of air; and the blue flame above stands for the Akasha, or "ether," above us, which in turn symbolizes liberation and emergence into the Brahman realm.

The analogies between this ancient pattern and Greek nature philosophy, Chinese pagodas, Muslim mosques, and much of European architecture are striking, and have not yet been historically investigated or explained.

were stored. This sphere establishes both the cupola of the Indian temple and the cupolas and domes of Byzantine churches and Mohammedan mosques.

The next lighter element is the element of fire. Fire consists of cone-shaped atoms with a point; again, according to the Greek atomists, explaining why fire hurts, for its atoms sting the body with their points. The element fire is located in the heart center. It stands, by virtue of its red color, for the wrath that is located in the blood of men, the qualities of the fighter. The red element provides the spire which we are apt to find on every structure of importance throughout the world.

But there is an element lighter than fire, and that is air. The element air has no color whatsoever, so it is white; and as the red spire presents us with the warrior caste, so the topmost white stands for the Brahmin caste: it is the finial, both to the class structure and to the temple structure. But the finial is tipped with something beyond the air, which the Indians call ether, and which is symbolized by a blue flame, the final tongue-like element on top of the whole structure. This, the representation of spiritual knowledge that is the subject of man's highest meditations, is connected to the structure by almost invisible wires or rods, so that it seems, or is designed to seem, as though it hovered over it. This pattern of building, which symbolizes the world from its densest to its lightest element, and also symbolizes the class structure, spiritual progress, and the body of Man, is the basic stereotype for all Hindu and Buddhist buildings of worship. The building itself, in symbolizing these things, becomes a focus for meditation. It symbolizes the body to the Indian mind, not necessarily to ours.

Ask a five-year-old Occidental child to draw a man, and he will draw arms, legs, a head, but also a big circle. When asked what the circle is, he will say it is the stomach, for since food and nutrition are so important to him, he draws the stomach as a thing of paramount importance. Ask an Indian child to make the same drawing, and he will also draw a circle, but the circle will not represent the stomach, but the breath pot, for he has been taught that breathing is the basic function both of his own body and of the universal body; and he has seen the sannyasi and his parents doing their breathing exercises.

The breath pot, according to yoga biology, is composed of a num-

ber of intricately interwoven tubes that guide the breath from the nostrils, down to the generative organs where the breath can be stored. By breathing alternately with one and then the other nostril, you can make a circuit through the two intertwined series of tubes. The Yogi, perhaps misunderstanding the function of the arteries, veins, and capillaries, also originally thought there were thousands of these tubes in the human body, all of which must be cleaned in order to give free flow to the breath. These cleaning methods are to us horrific. For instance, there is the practice of drawing a long strip of cotton cloth in the right nostril and trying to pull it out of the left nostril or out of the mouth; and there is the swallowing of ten feet of cotton ribbon into the stomach and then its extraction. Thus cleansed, the Yogi can direct his breath to any part of his body that may need it, perhaps to his feet, if they are cold, to his fingers, if they are wounded. The culmination of this system of breath control is imagined to be the ability to let the breath leave the body through what is called the royal way, through the cranium and out the top of the head, so that it is released into the higher world above us. This process one follows upward through the elements of generation, the bowels, or earth, through the higher functions, and then through the royal way. However, the royal way is guarded by a sleeping serpent called Kundalini. The snake has to be wakened by many different yoga exercises in order to make room for the breath to enter the supreme tube. As this is being done, the breath is gradually filtered through a whole system of "lotus flowers" that function as filters. For instance, in the region of the belly is the lotus flower that corresponds to the cupola of the temple, to the element of water; the heart center lotus is shaped as the element fire: it is a cone; the forehead center is shaped like a beggar's bowl, for it is the center where demands from above are received; and at last the breath emerges as the blue flame of Brahma that points to a higher world. This flame is analogous to the light in medieval stained glass windows that symbolizes the Holy Ghost, and stands like a little yellow flame above the heads of the disciples of Christ.

This system, with its symbolic referents, is common to all Indian cults, and is the basis of all Indian art. If we ask where these lotuses are located, we may find many books, particularly odd to the literal western mind, which will tell you they are in the body and

may be found by dissection. Actually Yoga anatomy distinguishes two bodies of Man, called the *sthula*, or gross; and the *sukshma*, or fine, *sharira*, or sheath. In other words, we have the physical body we know and the other, which we feel, and the two must not be confused.

Let us say we have a toothache. We feel it, but when we try to point it out to our dentist, we almost always get the wrong area or the wrong tooth. This sensation we call referred pain. The pain we feel is localized somewhere else subjectively than is its objective cause. We feel pain in the pain center of our brains. The feeling body is organized quite differently than is the *sthula sharira*, or gross body.

This difference underlies Indian art, most significantly for us in its magnificent sculpture, which is devoted to depicting the feeling rather than the corporeal body, the body as felt from within rather than the body as seen from without, even though it uses a similar form for both. Indian art is naturalistic, but not realistic or representational. It treats the body as a whole, and for this reason posture, which is the expressive vocabulary of the body, is just as important as, if not more important than, the expression of the face, which is used to depict emotion or thought. Both the shape of the human face and the outer anatomy of the body are not physiologically accurate in the sense that they are in western art.

Thus in Gupta art, which was the production of the golden age of Indian art, we are presented with the Buddha sitting on an elaborately carved lotus, in a yoga posture, with a halo round his head, usually intricately designed with various genii, and over the halo a gloriole; and the halo and gloriole are more finely worked than is the body, for the attention is focused rather on what we do not see with our outer eyes, the feelings of the man's meditation, than upon the visible man himself. The concentration is upon the spirit that ascends from the top of the cranium. It is an art not of appearances, but of feeling depicted by means of appearances.

Gupta art was predominantly Buddhist art. It dates from 320 A.D. to the middle of the 7th century. Buddhism did not acquire icons until quite late, and there was no stereotype for depicting the Buddha. The Indian artists therefore took over the Greek stereotype of Apollo and added to it caste marks and the Buddha's distinguishing features. We have only to compare the two to realize

the immense difference between an art whose highest expression was the body beautiful, and one whose most desired expression was the body sentient. Greek art strikes a posture. Indian art was totally dominated by inner rhythm. It is the difference between flashbulb photographers, the final shock troops of realism, and a still from a film of the dance.

The same principles dominate Indian architecture. It is designed to show feeling rather than objective structure; and indeed, unconsciously for the most part, this is what any architect who is also an artist is apt to do. Thus, architecturally, the Sainte Chapelle in Paris is a structural impossibility, designed not to shelter, or even, as time has proved, to support itself, but to give the impression of a world of light, the world of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, standing there, watching mannerly French schoolchildren breaking away from their governesses to chase the infinitely changing spots of light across the floor, in a parable of the spiritual chase, one sees the actual spiritual purpose of the building, even while its structural foundations are being reinforced by steel girders. Thus, in Medieval European structures, when one sees the belltower beside the church, but not an integral part of it, one can see that it is separated in part because the medieval architects felt the higher aspirations of man to arise not from the lower elements of the body, but to exist apart from them.

The Indian cannot conceive of this separation.

These things are worth mentioning, so that we may perceive that most of the symbolic systems of man, no matter how corrupt they may become, or how fanciful they may appear if taken literally, when we strip them down to their essentials, usually display a basic insight into the processes both of nature and of spiritual life that are essentially functional, since they underlie all human endeavor. The basic ideas of man may all be looked at from one side or the other. Every wall has two sides, but this does not change its nature. For some reason the western and the Asiatic minds seem to align themselves on opposite sides of such walls, but this opposition does not change the nature of the walls, but only the nature of their appearance, or interpretation. To understand the Oriental mind, we must turn the western mind inside out. To understand us, the Oriental must turn his own mind inside out.

For example, we have mentioned one of the three chief Oriental

architectural sacerdotal motifs. There is also the steep pyramid of Dravidian or South Indian architecture, which has no obvious dome element, but otherwise follows the pattern of the stupa, and shows us the hierarchies of this world and the next, from the lowest to the highest, as does the portal of a medieval cathedral. We have also the Buddhist world mountain, of which the most celebrated is the Borobudur, in Java. Since the lowest tier of the world mountain depicts the underworld, it is below the level of the ground and covered with earth. Yet, if this seems odd to us, in the western church we also have the crypt, seldom entered, but often no less elaborately carved. In Italy, and indeed in most Christian European countries, no one was allowed to be buried in the church itself. A monument to the dead, as to their spirit, was allowed, but their bodies, being dross, could be placed only in the crypt. And it was, for instance, with great daring that when Pier Cosimo de Medici died, the people of Florence evaded this proscription by burying his body in the crypt, but ran his monument up in a column from the tomb through the church floor and capped it with a monument before the altar. The process of mind is similar, after all. Symbolic ideas of placement are essential to man. No one has ever placed hell in the sky, or heaven under the earth.



## 6.

LATER  
HINDUISM

LIKE ANY OTHER FAITH, HINDUISM IN THE LONG PERIOD OF its history became subject to decay. To this natural tendency was added the limitation imposed by the series of basic ideas upon which the faith was built. These ideas were so all-embracing that once their ramifications were explored, little that was new could be added unless it came from outside the system, in the form of an alien cultural invasion. A revivifying influence was exerted on Hinduism in just this way. When a revival began in the 9th century, Hinduism developed new vigor, so that Buddhism was suppressed on the sub-continent; partly collapsing of its own decay, partly destroyed by invading Islamic barbarians, but chiefly conquered by resurgent Hinduism. In this reawakening, the organizing spirit was predominantly that of the philosophers Sankara and Ramanuja, each of whom, though in different ways, inspired later Vedanta philosophy. The progress of later Hinduism has been marked by the division of its followers into Vaishnavas and Saivas, the former experiencing the fascinosum, the latter the tremendum aspects of the numinous. So the picture has continued to the present day. Sankara was an exponent of the tremendum; Ramanuja of the fascinosum.

The strict Vedantism of Sankara we have already discussed. Ramanuja placed himself in opposition to it. He was a native of the southern section of India, the Deccan, and was therefore under strong Dravidian influence. He flourished in the 11th century A.D. The philosophy of Sankara held that plurality is an illusion and that only the One exists. The phenomenal world in that view is of no importance. Ramanuja held that plural phenomena are a manifestation of the One, and are therefore informed by the holy, so that the

phenomenal world *does* have religious importance. Both said that God is One.

They differ sharply in defining secondary manifestations of the One that is all. Sankara, seeing the phenomenal world as unreal, as illusion, rejected it in favor of a perception of higher reality. Ramanuja saw the phenomenal world as bearing everywhere within it the stamp of the divine, even though it was not in itself of divine material. Reality, in the sense that Godhead is the true reality, was to him a matter of degree. Everyday life did not contain such pure insight into Ultimate Reality as did the higher thought and meditation processes, but all layers of being were parallel in their nature, on an upward ladder towards the Ultimate.

Ramanuja had been trained to the strict Vedanta discipline of Sankara. He cast it off, believing that we might perceive something of the Divine even through the testimony of the world of the senses. The more detached was one's meditation, the more of the Divine it was possible to perceive, but this detachment did not invalidate sensory manifestations of the Divine. It merely placed them in their proper place on an ascending scale of insight. This view produced a doctrine of twofold knowledge, the knowledge that the phenomenal world displays of God, since the Creator is perceptible in all things; and the higher knowledge of God that is achieved only by the detached or liberated soul.

Ramanuja enhanced the importance of two things: an objective statement of the grace, or unmerited favor and beneficence of God; and the attitude of Bhakti; or trustful and obedient love on the part of the worshipper, a subjective, emotional attempt to seek God wholeheartedly, without any side issues or ulterior motives. Bhakti was not a deliberate act of the will on the part of the worshipper, but sprang from his realization of the all-embracing force of God. Though an idea of some nobility, Bhakti was to degenerate in the hands of later Vaisnavites and other such leaders of Chaitanya, in the 15th century, into acts of emotional and erotic passion that would make the Christian love feasts, or agape, seem relatively restrained.

Such is the classic dichotomy of Hindu thought, which has persisted throughout the history of India. But the dichotomy is not a strict or mutually exclusive one, and Hindu systems of thought are comprehensive enough to be able to absorb the elements of almost all other religions, whose originators are frequently regarded as av-

atars of Vishnu. So later Hinduism attempted to assimilate first Mohammedanism, and later Christianity; and finally, in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, to pass beyond specific religions to a synthetic vision of the religious impulse itself, a vision designed to embrace all previous and future history, all previous and future faiths.

The Muslim invasion of India, which at first caused the Hindu revival a serious setback, but eventually gave rise to a variety of creeds embracing features of both Hinduism and Islam, began as early as 711 A.D., when Muhammed bin Kasim sailed up the Indus to Aror and Multan. The Muslims from that date retained a hold on Sindh and the Panjab as far as Kashmir. The Panjab was firmly conquered in 1036, Benares in 1033, and Delhi in 1193, after the recapture of Benares. Delhi was the strongest of the Hindu states, so that upon taking it the Muslims were virtually in control of the country. They set up their capital there in 1206. By the end of the 14th century their conquest of the Deccan was effective, though it was never either secure or final, and in the next 200 years gave rise to at least 28 wars. The Deccan was finally subdued only in 1658, by Aurangzeb. Control of it did not outlast his lifetime. Thus, although under the Muslim conquest a brilliant series of rulers, Babur, Akbar, and Aurangzeb, maintained a Mohammedan culture that had a profound influence upon the indigenous culture of India, at the same time, in the Deccan, Hindu kingdoms, particularly that of Vijayanagar, continued to shelter, foster, and support the Hindu tradition and revival. The real power of the Muslim dynasty died with Aurangzeb, but the Muslim regime was actually terminated first by the onslaughts of the Persians, who so weakened it that the Hindus were in a position to reconquer lost territory; and second by the British, who conquered the resurgent Hindu kingdoms.

The British, however, kept a putative Muslim ruler at Delhi well into the first third of the 19th century.

As we shall see when we come to consider Kabir and the rise of Sikhism, by the 16th century, though factionalism and dispute ran high, there was sufficient tolerance and intellectual interest, for Muslim and Hindu alike to participate in public debate upon the relative merits of the two religions, and though few if any Muslims became adherents of Hinduism, many Hindus were in a position to accept or to reject Muslim ideas, at the same time retaining their own tradition. History provides us with few examples of supreme

rulers who desired to discover a faith that might embrace all faiths, rather than seeking to impose their own faith on others. It is significant that of these few, two at least were of India, the Maurya Asoka, who did so much to establish Buddhism, and the Muslim Akbar, who encouraged religious tolerance and debate.

The period between the fall of the University of Nalanda, in the 12th century A.D., and the coming of the British may be summarized somewhat briefly. The Indian religious thinkers of this period, with few exceptions, contributed little that was new. It is perhaps sufficient to mention the reformer, Chaitanya, a Vaishnavite who established a Bhakti cult in the 16th century. Chaitanya was born in Bengal in 1486. He was an ecstatic, an enormously influential religious leader, and a follower of Krishna, the most popular of Vishnu's avatars. As an ecstatic and a believer in the powers of Bhakti, he stood against the Vedanta tradition. He developed a highly emotional type of worship, involving much dancing and playing of musical instruments. After his death, he himself came to be the object of a cult that survived and had much influence on the important 19th century Brahma Samaj movement that we will shortly examine.

The period may be somewhat sweepingly summarized by saying that Shankara's followers are mainly Saivas, and that those who follow the philosophy of Ramanuja are mainly Vaishnavas. However, the summary must be made with care, for the division arises from emphasis, rather than from mutual exclusion. For the Vaishnavite, God is present in all earthly conditions and situations, whether they appear outwardly positive or negative. This is an understandable viewpoint.

But it is somewhat more difficult for a westerner to understand the attitude of the Saivas. In the western world the principle of evil has always been thought to be wholly negative and wholly bad. If we are to understand the cult of Siva, we must remember that to the Indian mind the negative principle is not of necessity evil simply because it is negative, for the Hindus believe in the evolution and involution of the universe, in the inhalation and exhalation that are equally essential to the process of breath, which is life. Siva, to the Indian, is simply the god who takes away. He removes the dross, but he removes things only when they have become dross. And he removes the dross in order to make room for what will come next. His action is like that of Brahma's inhalation, which must occur so that



PLATE SEVEN

According to a tale from the *Puranas*, all the gods once united to equip Durga, the creative-destructive female counterpart of Siva, with the essential power of all their celestial weapons. However, when these proved powerless against the demonic energy she was combatting, Durga succeeded in subduing him by stepping on him with one of her bare feet.

It seems that at least one of the symbolical implications of this myth is that woman, in her innate power, is infinitely superior to all the most enthusiastic anima-projections with which man may choose to equip her.

Brahma may once more exhale the world. If Siva did not exist to clear the way for the next thing that is to happen, we would all be still photographs forever, from the cinema of life.

No matter how we may be able to grasp this idea intellectually, it is a difficult one for us to grasp emotively. Let us say, then, to make it clearer, that Siva represents a great black wave, on which we surfboard towards the good, and beach there.

This ancient Saiva theology connects itself with the radical Vedanta philosophy of Sankara, who says that nothing exists but God. According to Sankara, the only reality is Brahma, only Brahma exists, and hence the world as we know it is only a non-existent illusion devoid of ultimate values.

At first sight this conception might seem wholly opposed to the Vaishnava belief that God exists everywhere in the world; but opposites are frequently easier to reconcile than shades of belief, for they are two sides of the same coin. One has only to turn it over to reach the opposite view. For degrees of belief, one needs infinite adjustment to make reconciliation possible. But opposites do not need reconciliation, since they are usually merely the same room seen from different sides of the mirror. So Vaishnavas and Saivas are not opposed schools of thought as much as they are different attitudes towards the same basic and common belief. One thus finds Saivas and Vaishnavas living side by side in perfect amity, for the Hindus do not believe that one interpretation of a universal truth is necessarily right, so that the others must necessarily be wrong.

By the time we reach the 19th century, however, the history of Hinduism begins to show more diversity, for it displays the impact of many foreign cultural influences upon a long-established indigenous culture, an impact that produced various philosophical and religious problems that are apt to arise when two cultures difficult to reconcile not only meet, but are forced to cohabit.

It has sometimes been said that Indian nationalism itself was made in Great Britain, insofar as it was evoked as a defense against the daily example of British nationalism.

Though there has always been a feeling for Bharata, or Mother India, among the Indians, as we may see by reading the great epics, and also by reading *Kalidasa*, this feeling is not quite the same as nationalism. India is a vast country, embracing many different races, traditions, climates, cultures, governments, and economies. If we



added to the ethnic cultures of the United States a tradition at least 5,000 years old, but kept the diversity of racial stock, we might have something of the picture. The *Ramayana* contains a description of this motherland as seen on a ride in a heavenly golden carriage. But though Hindu literature contains the concept of many peoples living in one land, nowhere in early Indian literature will you find the concept of one people living in one land as one nation.

The ancient Indian feeling of belonging to one motherland was greatly reinforced by the age-old habit of making pilgrimages, pilgrimages that even today bring the various peoples of India together at one shrine, sometimes for weeks at a time. The great pilgrimages of medieval Europe, before the rise of nationalism, accomplished much the same thing in the same way, by uniting peoples of different tongues and countries at one common religious goal. All Hindus share a common metaphysical attitude, whatever their specific beliefs may be. In this attitude they have a feeling for the motherland and a feeling of togetherness. But this feeling does not constitute nationalism in the sense in which we use that term today. It took a foreign conqueror, in the person of the British, to evoke that, for unlike the earlier invaders of India, the British were not assimilated by the Hindu community, but on the contrary maintained a status of separateness and even of superiority to the people they governed that did much to evoke in the minds of their Indian subjects a defensive nationalism of the modern Western type. The Indians see themselves not as the people, but as the peoples of India.

This new nationalism showed not only in such movements as the so-called Mutiny of 1857, but also on the spiritual and religious levels. It gave rise to a number of 19th century movements that collectively are referred to as the Hindu Renaissance. The first of these was the Brahma Samaj, instituted by Ram Mohan Roy and Debendra Nath Tagore in 1828, though its creed and tenets were formulated by a somewhat later leader, Keshab Chandra Sen, in 1868.

The essence of the Brahma Samaj is what might be called extreme religious liberalism, and the complementary exclusion of religious conservatism. Its perhaps subconscious absorption of some of the best aspects of Christian doctrine has led to the virtual union of the Brahma Samaj with the Unitarian mission in India, and this iden-

tification is still operative today. The Brahma Samaj has very high spiritual ideals, ideals of great purity, but it has always been far too intellectual to appeal to the masses, and has therefore made few converts, except for the small, elite group that today is to be found almost exclusively in Calcutta and other parts of Bengal. The movement has proved attractive to many of the better minds of contemporary India.

Another of these 19th century movements is the Arya Samaj, which is still powerful in the Panjab. It was founded at Bombay in 1875, by Dayanand Sarasvati, who wished religion to turn back to the *Vedas* for guidance and inspiration. He wished to purge Hinduism of later accretions, to extirpate Christianity and Islam. Dayanand himself was a typical figure of the Hindu Renaissance, since he was himself a hybrid, raised partly by Christian missionary schools and partly by yoga teachers. He claimed that monotheism was to be found in the *Vedas*.

Since by definition Hinduism is all-embracing, it must contain monotheism, the chief claim of Christianity as a revealed religion, and so the Hindus sought to prove. Christianity, from the Hindu viewpoint, might be said to be contained within Hinduism, rather than prefigured by it, as the Christians would have been willing to admit in order to resolve the conflict. But the Hindu would regard Christianity as a late offshoot of Hinduism. This attitude prevails in India today. Yet it is by no means certain that monotheism, as the western mind conceives it, is to be found in the *Vedas*, and much more likely that the Hindus came to appreciate the value of monotheism largely as a result of their contacts with Islam and Christianity. Indeed, to attempt to trace monotheism in the *Vedas* is an unrewarding task, and one not supported by a scientific evaluation of the texts. In a somewhat similar way, recent scholars in Japan have attempted to find monotheistic thinking in Shinto legend and doctrine, with much the same result.

The main contribution of the Arya Samaj has been its social and educational reform, and this contribution has been considerable. The movement has founded a number of schools patterned on the ancient Hindu model. These schools, which are mostly located in the Panjab, are called Gurukuls, and have as many as 500,000 members.

The creed of the Arya Samaj was given formal statement at the opening of the group's establishment at Lahore, in 1877. The first

two articles of this creed are belief in God and belief in the *Vedas*, but the worldly goals of the Arya Samaj are set forth in ten articles, which stress monotheism and an attitude of social altruism.

The outlook of the faith is perhaps best exemplified by its temple at Hardvar, which though a Hindu temple in every detail of ritual structure, is in a sense a temple to a God unknown, since it contains no representation of any deity.

Christianity made a considerable impact upon India. With the establishment of the British there, Hinduism was forced to consider Christianity as something more than the minor creed of a handful of European traders and disputatious priests. Under the sponsorship of the East India Company, and later of the Viceroy and his government, Christianity took root in India as it never had before, for though its converts among the Hindus were few, it was an indispensable adjunct of the European colonials. From being a religious curiosity, the faith of casual visitors, it had become the religion of the conqueror. This position enhanced its prestige, but not necessarily its acceptability. The Christian missionaries labored under the disadvantage of having to proselytize a religion that claimed to be unique, and therefore demanded that their converts be Christians and Christians only; whereas the Hindus, whose religion and philosophy were adjusted to embrace all creeds within their own bodies of doctrine, saw no difficulty in being both Hindus and Christians simultaneously, and no reason why they should not be both, if they so wished, a stumbling block that Christian missions have encountered everywhere in the Orient.

When Hinduism finally came to deal seriously with Christianity during the 19th century, it did so less in response to Christian organized doctrinal faith, than in response to the material culture produced by Christian civilization and ethics. Almost nowhere in Indian works on the subject will you find Christianity treated as a revealed religion or as a matter of faith; on the other hand, you will find it endlessly discussed as an ethical system.

The Hindus represent their historical reaction to Christianity in terms of six words: *not true, not new, not you*. When they first encountered Christianity, they felt it was not valid. When they came to examine it more closely for its ethical content, they felt it was not a new creed, for they realized that it reflected the perennial philosophy behind all faiths. When they considered and embraced the

highest ideals of Christianity and of Christian missionary endeavor, they felt it was not something introduced by foreigners for the first time, but merely a foreign expression of a creed implicit in the *Vedas*, and so Hindu to begin with. By this proverbial epigram they also wanted to indicate their feeling that most Christian missionaries did not live up to Christianity.

The Christian missionaries in India are faced with certain distinct problems. First of all they preach the Christ principle as something all-pervasive, but insist that this principle is tied up with the figure of Jesus Christ and cannot exist separated from that figure. The Hindus, though willing to accept Christian ethics as part of the perennial philosophy, cannot and will not accept the uniqueness of Jesus Christ the revealed teacher. The missionaries teach that Jesus was a good man and a wonderdoer, a miracle worker appealing to the masses. This aspect also, the Hindus are willing to accept, but they once more cannot accept Him as *the* wonderdoer. And the third difficulty experienced by the Christian missionary in India today is that, by and large, he preaches a type of Christianity that has been relegated to a secondary place by contemporary Christian theologians and therefore does not appeal to the elite and intellectual classes, which prefer reason and ethics to faith. The vanguard of present-day Christianity is in the hands of such dialectical theologians as Karl Barth, for Christian theology is undergoing a doctrinal crisis, and this type of thought is antipathetic to the Indian mind. Indians refuse to accept it.

But Christianity on the salvational level appeals chiefly not to the elite or the intellectuals, but to the masses of India, and therefore the elite find a salvationist creed too primitive for their tastes, and identify it with the lower levels of their own class system.

The crux of the difficulty is however that the Christian missionary insists upon the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and the Indians, who have a system that allows them to accept all other faiths as part of their own, but rejects all claims to uniqueness, simply cannot accept this exclusiveness.

But in addition, perhaps restimulated by contact with Christianity, Hinduism has to a certain extent become a proselytizing creed itself. But this proselytizing is chiefly restricted to reclaiming for Hinduism all the Indians who have joined Islam, Christianity, or other faiths operating within India's territorial borders. The Hindus

have no desire to spread their faith beyond India's ethnic borders, or to other and alien races and creeds.

We shall now turn back to discuss two Hindus of the post-British Christian influence, Ramakrishna, of the 19th century, and Sri Aurobindo, of the 20th; the first an inspirational visionary, the second a mystical philosopher.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa lived from 1836 until 1886. He was an illiterate peasant, a Bengali Brahman of the Vaishnava sect. He learned no Sanskrit and little English. He learned from story telling, religious drama, and from Hindu ascetics. He became a lowly assistant in a Kali temple near Calcutta, for the penniless Brahmin is usually forced by the circumstances and taboos of his existence to take a servile position in some temple. He became a disciple of Kali, experienced trances, and disturbed his family by the excess of his devotions. They married him off, when he was twenty-five, to a bride of five. The couple did not live together. Later his wife became his pupil, and he regarded her as his "mother," an embodiment of Kali in her mother aspect. He spent twelve years in meditation and prayer, and was deeply influenced by the Bhairavi Brahmani, a nun and devotee of Kali. She taught him Tantric methods of realization and Tantric yoga. A naked ascetic, Totapuri, exposed him to the monistic doctrines of Sankara, and initiated him as a sannyasi. Ramakrishna became convinced that the Supreme Being was both beyond attributes and identity, and also that He *had* attributes and identity, on a different level of being. Ramakrishna was a Vaishnava, and now desired fuller insight and a deeper attitude of Bhakti. He disguised himself in women's clothes and impersonated Radha, the wife of Krishna. So disguised, at the age of thirty, he was granted ultimate insight. He then wished to extend his insight to other religions, and did so by the same process of imitation that had led him to impersonate Radha. He became temporarily a Mohammedan and then a Christian, by simulation. He concluded that all religions were equally true and all of them absolutely true, a central point in his doctrine, and one that cannot be too much stressed in evaluating him. His chief intellectual accomplishment was a reconciliation of opposites by the assumption that they co-existed and were equally true, though not necessarily equally apparent at the same time. "At one time I am clothed, at another naked, so Brahman is at one time with attributes, and at another without," he said. At the age of



thirty-six, by yoga discipline, and by his own method of imitative identification, he had attained insight and began to become known and to exert influence. Though illiterate, he had attracted a disciple who wrote down his sayings, parables, and wisdom. This disciple was Vivekananda. Ramakrishna dealt with the demands of Christians that theirs should be accepted as the sole religion by stating that since all religions were equally valid, then every man should remain in the religion of his birth, and everything in Hinduism should be defended. His was not an apostolic mission.

A quotation may give something of the flavor of his ideas:

A wood-cutter led a very miserable life with the small means he could procure by daily selling the load of wood brought from a neighboring forest. Once a Sannyasin, who was wending his way through the forest, saw him at work and advised him to proceed onward into the interior recesses of the forest, intimating to him that he would be a gainer thereby. The wood-cutter obeyed the injunction and proceeded onward until he came to a sandalwood tree, and being much pleased, he took away with him as many sandal logs as he could carry and sold them in the market and derived much profit. Then he began to think within himself why the good Sannyasin did not tell him anything about the wood of the sandal trees, but simply advised him to proceed onward into the interior of the forest. So the next day he went on beyond the place of the sandalwood, and at last came upon a copper mine, and he took with him as much copper as he could carry, and selling it in the market, got much money by it. Next day, without stopping at the copper mine, he proceeded further still, as the Sadhu had advised him to do, and came upon a silver mine, and took with him as much of it as he could carry and sold it and got even more money; and so daily proceeding further and further, he got at gold mines and diamond mines and at last became exceedingly rich. Such is also the case with the man who aspires after true knowledge. If he does not stop in his progress after attaining a few extraordinary and supernatural powers, he at last becomes really rich in the eternal knowledge of truth.<sup>1</sup>

Two facets of Ramakrishna's life are well worth considering, insofar as they illustrate certain truths about Hinduism. The first is that, born a Vaishnava, he saw no contradiction in devoting himself to Kali, the consort of Siva. As we have seen, the division between those who follow Vishnu and Siva is never absolute. The second is that his life, and therefore his teaching, is firmly based upon a mother concept.

<sup>1</sup> Swami Abhedananda, *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York: The Vedanta Society, 1903).



The god Kartikeya, the leader of the heavenly army, once happened to scratch a cat with his nail. On going home he saw there was a mark of a scratch on the cheek of his mother. Seeing this, he asked of her, "Mother, dear, how have you got that ugly scratch on your cheek?" The goddess Durga replied: "Child, this is thy own handiwork—the mark scratched by thy own nail." (*Durga and Kali are virtually synonymous*). Kartikeya asked in wonder, "Mother, how is it? I never remember to have scratched thee!" The mother replied, "Darling, hast thou forgotten having scratched a cat this morning?" Kartikeya said, "Yes, I did scratch a cat; but how did your cheek get marked?" The mother replied, "Dear child, nothing exists in this world but myself. I am all creation. Whomsoever thou hurtest, thou hurtest me." Kartikeya was greatly surprised at this, and determined never to marry; for whom would he marry? Every woman was mother to him. I am like Kartikeya. I consider every woman as my divine mother.<sup>2</sup>

Ramakrishna held that God in his inert condition without attributes, that is, the God beyond everyday reality, was Brahman. But in his condition with attributes, as manifesting Himself in every day life, he was Kali, or the mother. To us this belief seems an out and out mother-fixation, an Oedipus complex with God. It is partly that, but not entirely. For the original Aryans had a male pantheon; the indigenous Dravidians a predominantly female one, and the resultant mixture was ambivalent.

As we have said, Ramakrishna was illiterate, and his sayings and wisdom were taken down by his disciple Vivekananda. Vivekananda was an exceptionally brilliant man, and he wrote in English. He thereby created singlehanded the spiritual vocabulary by means of which Indian traditions have found expression in the West, either in direct translation, or by means of discussions and commentaries upon them. He was a prolific writer, and in the sense that he did create this vocabulary, his contribution towards our knowledge of India was far greater than that of the 19th century Indologists who were his contemporaries.

He also had a considerable influence upon the Theosophical movement and its two occidental leaders, Mme. Blavatsky and Annie Besant, for his were the only translations immediately available. In the West Theosophy is something of a fringe movement, or is so regarded. In India, on the contrary, it is a firmly established and well-integrated Society, widespread in its membership, and one that ar-

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

rived on the scene at a critical hour. But Theosophy is Hinduism dressed up in traditional Christian terms, and therefore it is Hinduism subtly distorted, of much value, but by no means pure. Western concepts of evolution and of progress have oddly blurred the Hindu elements in Theosophy, and these concepts in turn have poured back into the mainstream of Hindu thought, so mingling with the native tradition that even Hindus have been led to assume that these ideas existed in Hindu thought prior to contact with the West, and that therefore they are implicit in the *Vedas*. Vivekananda and Theosophy somehow merged, so that now, whatever the degree of adulteration may be, the Indian intelligentsia live and think in terms of the vocabulary that he invented. This vocabulary cannot help but influence their thinking.

When we turn from Ramakrishna, an inspired man but a traditionalist, to Sri Aurobindo, equally inspired, but a highly literate and efficient syncretist, we find quite a different intellectual climate.

Sri Aurobindo, the greatest contemporary Indian philosopher, might be called, quite against the general opinion, the greatest Christian missionary in India. There have been many Christian missionaries there, such figures as C. F. Andrews and Stanley Jones, but none has had such an impact as Sri Aurobindo and his basically Christian message. He is a man worshipped by hundreds of thousands and respected by millions, rejected by many, but disregarded by no one. In his retreat at Pondicherry he is less the philosopher of Hinduism than the philosopher of religion in general, the voice of that which comparative religion leaves undisputed.

It is entirely characteristic of him that he begins, in his main work, *The Life Divine*, by speaking of the evil and negative practice of escapism that we see everywhere in the world about us, and which is at the bottom of most of our neurotic disorders. To practice escapism is to avoid accepting the world as it is by substituting for the real world a personal world in which more favorable conditions prevail. First, Aurobindo talks to Americans, denouncing the materialist type of escapism that sees the soul as nothing but an excretion akin to the excretion of the glands of the body. Gadgetry, that is, the worship of gadgets and gimmicks, has produced a magnificent technical civilization, one whose advances are acutely needed not only in America but even more in India. Sri Aurobindo is the last

one to wish to give up any of its positive accomplishments. He himself runs his own ashram on modern lines, complete with hotel, printing press, and dairy. Nonetheless materialism is escapism, insofar as it permits us to evade the responsibilities of the soul.

Secondly, Aurobindo turns against the other type of escapism that characterizes the East, and in particular India. He finds this type absent in the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and in the great spiritual heritage of India, but finds it present in Buddhism and Sankara; the Buddha and Sankara being Aurobindo's two favorite scapegoats. The escapism of the Orient is a flight into the soul to avoid the requirements of material reality. It was so effective that India let its material culture fall into decay, and was open to easy conquest by invaders from inferior civilizations. Such escapism had led to the misery of the masses, to underproduction, unsanitary conditions, a lack of doctors and hospitals to cope with the results of the neglect, and to all the actual evils present in India. This condition Aurobindo blames on the tendency to deny objective reality in order to escape from it into the pleasanter and more convenient realms of the spirit. Aurobindo would not give up the spiritual heritage of India, but to it he would add the material discoveries of the West, at the same time excluding the western denial of spiritual values. In other words, Aurobindo visualizes the ideal philosophy of religion of the future not as a fifty-fifty mixture of East and West, but as 100 per cent of both, since the positive attainments of each are valuable, each in its own sphere.

This synthetic philosophy Sri Aurobindo expresses mainly in terms of a vast metaphysical system founded on a concept of the Brahman, which he calls *Sat chit ananda*, from Sat, the Being of Being of which all other things are the shadow; chit, the consciousness of being conscious, that is, the atman of which all other states of consciousness are the projection; and ananda, bliss that is beyond joy and pain, the realization of the Ultimate that casts a new light upon experience.

In his view, *Sat chit ananda* has shadowed itself down into mind, vitality, body, matter, and the atom. History is the process of evolution, but it reaches a point at which the involution of the Ultimate into matter becomes reversed, so that matter once more opens upward, as a flower opens, into the Ultimate, like the lotus flower called aurobindo, which rises from the mud of pools.

The advent for which all creation waits,  
 The beautiful visage of Eternity  
 That shall appear upon the roads of Time.<sup>8</sup>

This process of a mutual involution-evolution establishes the nature of all the facts of human history, according to Aurobindo. His metaphysical system is based not on a dualistic, but on a completely monistic system. The monistic element is *Sat chit ananda*, or true being or consciousness, the Being of Being in its aspect of bliss, an equivalent to what more ancient Indian philosophy had called the Brahman or, beyond that, the tat, or Thatness. This entity interpenetrates all that can be called existence, pouring down into the particular as though towards the vortex of a funnel. It might be called the incarnation of the Divine, rather than the creative force of the universe. This incarnatory process is termed, in Aurobindo's terminology, involution: the ultimate screws itself down into time, space, and matter. To this degree Aurobindo's system is in the great tradition of Indian thought. Such theories of the incarnation of the Divine in some aspect of the phenomenal world exist in the *Brahmanas*, and other early Indian prose writings, where the Brahman is said to have come down into all aspects of material reality, leaving none of them unpenetrated.

To Aurobindo, history has reached the turn. We have been living for ages through the stage wherein the ultimate once more evolves up out of reality into higher and higher realms of light, from the darkness that is matter. Aurobindo's theory is that at the very end of the involutionary period the Divine penetrated into the atomic structure, the densest particles of being as we know it, and then began to reverse. As modern scientists would say, continuous creation is going on now and through all time in the appearance out of nowhere of hydrogen atoms; one scientific theory to explain the existence of matter. In many ways Aurobindo's system betrays a similarity to the more theoretical side of modern physics, which holds that it took incalculable time to build up the various galaxies (3½ billion years is one estimate) to the point where a minor satellite of one of the stars could be capable of producing and sustaining life. By comparison, the geologic ages that it took to produce the first infusoria and then us on our planet are very brief indeed.

<sup>8</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* (Pondicherry: The Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1950-51).

Certainly it is taken for granted by modern science, and where provable, proved, that each succeeding period is somewhat shorter than the preceding one. So that Aurobindo's involution, in that sense, is taking place, as time narrows down to the vortex, before turning out again. In such a view the entire history of man takes less than a second in relation to the duration of existent things. Therefore Sri Aurobindo ridicules the doctrine that man is the ultimate crown of creation. This doctrine has been based religiously upon the idea that man is the *Imago Dei*, the image of God. To be sure, the fact that *Sat chit ananda* has shadowed itself down into all things presupposes that all things, including man, are the incarnation of the Divine image, but that is by no means the same thing as Man being the unique *Imago Dei*. Thus if the statement that Man is the image of God means that he alone and exclusively is that image, then the idea is irrelevant and we are trapped in the naïve anthropomorphism that presents us with God as an old man with a long white beard.

It follows that if all things are divine, then that which will succeed Man will also be incarnate divinity. So Man's position at the pinnacle of creation is only transitory. We are now facing, according to Aurobindo, a new and higher way of existence. We await the birth of a new higher consciousness, which is inevitable, since we have by no means reached the full scope of divinity either in our persons or in the persons of anything at present existent. *Sat chit ananda* has not yet achieved stasis, in short. In other words, our newspaper reports are not yet the word of God.

Aurobindo sees this further evolution as unavoidable and inevitable, two words that recur constantly in his writings. Involution and evolution are complementary processes. Seen from the psychological angle, one might interpret this theory to mean that the process of evolution proceeds from the utmost unconscious reality of rocks and atoms, from the structure of matter, to a dawning of what might be called subconscious drives, the source of our animal instincts, to the extent that we share the drives of all the lower evolved forms. From subconscious drives evolved consciousness and mind.

Today we might be said to be living far more in the consciousness, in the soul and the mind, than in the physical body. This is not to say that we have discarded the physical body, but that we are emerging from it into something higher that carries more weight in

our decisions, conscious thought, and spiritual experience. This partially evolved higher consciousness receives or intuitively from time to time the content of still higher and more subtle realms, to which we will eventually evolve. Our higher consciousness therefore receives something like revelation, and will receive it more and more. The processes of evolution and involution therefore overlap.

Therefore we cannot say that the immediate past represents nothing but involution, and that at a certain precise point in ancient history involution was replaced by evolution, so that now we are in a period of evolution only. These gigantic cosmic systems overcome the category of consecutive time, and the two processes are co-joiners, the involutionary and evolutionary movement of the Divine being two aspects of a divine wholeness, existent both in every stage and in every moment of time. When we feel like practicing Yoga meditation and in our aspirations yearn towards higher development, the movement of the Divine comes down to meet us halfway, as we rise to meet it halfway. In the viewpoint of eternity, these two processes are identical. Thus St. Augustine, in the first chapter of his *Confessions*, can say that when he longs for God, does that mean that he has found God, or that he has not found God; for if he had not found God, he would not know of God, since it is God who gives him the yearning for God, and who Himself yearns for the soul of St. Augustine, being part of that soul. But if St. Augustine had found God fully and knew Him fully, he would be incapable of yearning, since he would be fulfilled, and thus not have to struggle.

So it is with our religious feelings. They are ambivalent insofar as the personal aspiration towards the divine is also the magnetic power of the divine, which attempts to draw up what we mistakenly consider to be our own lower-realm nature. We are already, by the mixed nature of our consciousness, arrows shot towards the higher realm. So unavoidably and inevitably the movement will continue from where we are now, higher into those realms Aurobindo calls, in his sweeping psychological terminology, the progress from the human mind through the higher mind, overmind, and up to the supermind.

The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognize and



not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother.<sup>4</sup>

Something will of necessity develop out of man, if only through man's own efforts, which are in turn only the other side of *Sat chit ananda's* magnetic pull. What will be developed will hardly be nameable as man, or human, in the sense that we talk about ourselves as human. Therefore, somewhat unfortunately, Aurobindo calls the next stage of development the "superman." This superman that he imagines, however, has nothing in common either with Nietzsche, the folk heroes of mythology, or the smartly-dressed conquerors of science fiction. More frequent than his use of the term "superman" in his reference to what he calls "a gnostic being," a being who has noticed true wisdom and thus can see deeper into the meaning of involution and evolution than can *homo sapiens* or any other member of the animal kingdom.

Even today there are higher men, closer, so to speak, to the frontier of the spiritual than we are. Such men stand like a beacon and from their outlook things seem otherwise than they do to the traveler in the plains. From such a vantage point, one can already foresee the automobile accident that will occur between two cars rushing towards each other round a corner, on roads you can see but the drivers cannot. The spectator in the tower can see the inevitable. The traveler in the plain is about to give up for want of water, but the observer in the tower can see that his path leads to a hidden lake. So, to the person who has taken a higher and more remote viewpoint, the consequences of life and existence become more explicable and visible than they are to ordinary men.

The superman or gnostic being equipped with such vision will arise from the inseparable process of involution and evolution. Aurobindo does not give much of a description of the appearance or behavior of his predicted superman. We may judge that he will be free of the restraints of instinctive life that hold us down to the level of the subconscious and the unevolved consciousness. In modern terms, the superman will be a thoroughly analyzed individual with no dark pockets of hidden conflict in his subconscious. The light that will evolve in his mind will penetrate to the lower strata of his ex-

<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother* (Calcutta: The Arya Publishing House, 1946), pp. 88-89.

istence and sterilize and transform them. If you wish to characterize the superman, you may say that he will be powerful indeed, for he will not be hampered and hindered by the limitations of matter and of his own subconscious drives. His every decision will be an ultimate decision that will thus become reality as soon as it is formed. He will be without ego, a condition considered by Aurobindo as the hallmark of the gnostic being; for the ego is a knot or snarl in the threads of lower nature that will unravel and be no more as soon as the gnostic being evolves from the agnostic being of today.

In this respect Aurobindo is very much in line with the central teachings of Hindu philosophy, and with the *Bhagavad-Gita*, where the overcoming of the ego is also an essential doctrine conditional to enlightenment.

In India today there are many among the intelligentsia and the philosophical who consider Aurobindo's system to be highly Utopian, and who point out that it is in accordance with ancient Hindu doctrine to believe that evolution will take place in the highest spirit, so that ultimately the Divine will be all existent, and a gnostic being will become possible; but they ask how long the process will take. Obviously, it will take so incredibly long to achieve, that perhaps it is scarcely worth considering now.

Aurobindo has considered this objection, and brings us the consolation of saying that perhaps the process may *not* take so long, for each process has been shorter than the one preceding it, from the formation of the solar system down to the mental evolution of man. So perhaps we are narrowing rapidly down to the nexus, the involution-evolution process being a hyperbolic curve, and will suddenly reverse and sweep as rapidly upward. And, says Aurobindo, in the 20th century we are for the first time realizing the necessity of future and further evolution, which has been made the deliberate object of consciousness and the goal of our will. Nowhere before has nature been able to reflect about its own movements and to push those movements from within and so accelerate them. That we are able to speculate about the nature of this upward movement, and to find it an aspiration in our own mind, and to do something about it, shows that we have already become involved in evolution to a stronger and faster degree than ever nature has been before. Thus the process may not take centuries at all. Maybe, for that matter, the evolved gnostic being existent in matter is already among us, as

yet unnoticed. Many followers of Sri Aurobindo believe so, and see Aurobindo himself as a gnostic being, regarding the ashram at Pondicherry over which he presided as a sort of experimental laboratory in which supermen were being developed.

Wherever you have a system as optimistic as that of Sri Aurobindo, you will inevitably run into the problem of evil and of pain. For if all existent things are the shadowing down of *Sat chit ananda*, pure consciousness and pure bliss, then it is difficult to account for pain and evil. This problem, called theodicy, or the problem of justifying God for the pain and evil of the world, is an age-old question that has bothered all theological systems, and in particular the Christian. It has usually been answered in the Christian tradition by the statement that God, our creator, had to create free beings, giving them the choice of right and wrong, since only in that way could he be loved by them freely. If they were not given the chance of rejecting pain and evil, then their choice of accepting him would have been no choice, and so would have been meaningless. This type of creation has the particular drawback that Man, given the possibility of choice, sometimes chose the wrong rather than the right. The chance of this choice was considered by theodicy-philosophers to be the unavoidable, unfortunate, but necessary condition of the creation of free beings.

Leibniz, who wrote two volumes on theodicy in the 17th century, tells us, in parable form, that he, being thoroughly dissatisfied with the painful state of the universe as a whole, was led by the angels of God into an enormous warehouse where models of all possible universes were stored. There he was given the choice of picking the one he thought the best, which would replace the present one of which he had complained. Leibniz examined the millions of universes that could have been possible and finally picked one, realizing that none was perfect, but that that one was the best, containing a minimum of evil. Of course the angels smiled and said that that was the one God chose in the first place, the world he lived in and of which he complained. Relatively, the present world is the best of all possible ones.

This is the solution of Christianity to the problem of pain. Aurobindo has a different answer. He begins by minimizing the power of pain, which, in fact, is often a warning, telling us that pain after all plays but a small part in the whole of creation. Pain and evil, he

would say, do not exist in the atom or in mere matter; and there is very little pain experienced by the plants of the average garden, which are capable of disease, but not of distress. The animals feel pain, domestic animals more than do the wild, for domestic animals suffer longer, though less. Aurobindo cites the zoologists, who have found that carnivorous animals usually kill their prey quickly by biting the neckbone or some highly vulnerable spot. The process of death in such animals is more a form of extreme excitement than of pain. So pain, in the sense in which we use the term, and evil certainly, are more or less restricted to Mankind. Of course there will be no pain in the super creation that will follow Man, for there egoistic convulsions will be nonexistent. So pain exists only in a very small part of creation, and even there Man overstresses its importance, for pain to a large extent is a habit or conditioned reflex. Physical pain, indeed, is a defense mechanism. A child will loathe hot pepper, and an adult demand it. Pain turns into joy, and one does not have to refer to masochism alone to realize this.

So pain is less a fact than a matter of perspective. Indeed the saints seem immune to it. Ramdas, the living sage of the Malabar coast, when he pricks his foot smiles and says, Ram (God) has come to Ramdas. It is an advent of the Divine, which hurts very much, and Ramdas beams with laughter, having overcome joy and pain because he is in bliss, in ananda, which receives each experience as a realization of the Being of Being, and so forgets the evaluative shading which our lower consciousness gives to events.

Aurobindo does not claim that the race of Man as a whole will someday suddenly be transformed into a race of gnostics. For not all atoms become infusorial plants, and not all monkeys men. Similarly, not all men will become supermen. There will still be men about who will, instead of becoming gnostics, establish the next type of animal race. We cannot expect any social order to attain perfection so long as it is composed of imperfect human beings.

An essential part of Aurobindo's thought is his statement that until now Yoga, even the Buddhist and Vedantic types of yoga fostered by Sankara, has been largely an idealistic type of escapism, an effort on the part of man to elude his ego and matter, rather than an attempt to transmute them into a higher evolutionary form. He turns all his humor against such escapism, for he feels that Yoga contains elements of both evolution and involution. His own type of

yoga, "our yoga" he calls it, is a synthetic or integrate yoga that makes use of all yoga systems preceding his own time. It is designed not only to develop higher realms of consciousness, but also to apply these superior insights to the lower, subconscious, egoistic world. This system implies a transformation of the dreamlife of the subconscious and unconscious, in order that the matter of our body and of our surroundings may be transformed. In this element of transformation you have the outlook that makes it possible for us to consider Aurobindo as the greatest Christian missionary in India, not that he mentions Jesus Christ or any of the denominations of Christianity. On the contrary, he avoids doing so. But his monistic and totally unmanichaeian view of the Kingdom of God on Earth brings his message very much into alliance with the major emphasis of the Christian message.

Of course there is an element of dualism in Aurobindo's system, but this element is not the diabolic concept of Man that has done so much damage to Christian thought, and derives from Manichaeism, but is rather the stressing of man's participation in his own salvation. It is up to the individual, as the shadow of *Sat chit ananda*, to bring about the ultimate self-realization of the Divine in the divine.

So, in one of his poems, Aurobindo tells us, "Make earth the home of the wonderful, and life beatitude's kiss." It is a message gentle, universal, and detached, but extremely ethical in its concept of social responsibility.

The key to this philosophy is Integralism:

The philosophy of integralism aims at a connected view of the nature of the universe on the basis of an integration of all the cognitive resources of human personality. Most of the so-called philosophical systems in the West are the outcome of the rational interpretation of the nature of existence chiefly in terms of a particular province of human experience. For instance, materialism is usually the philosophical outlook of a physicist or natural scientist, whereas spiritualism is a religious man's philosophy of life. . . . Sri Aurobindo stresses the fact that a sound and adequate philosophy should be based upon an integrated vision of the nature of existence. Such an integrated vision can be attained not through mere critical reflection upon the plurality of fragmentary human experiences such as commonsense, art, science, morality, religion, and the like, but by outgrowing all partial experiences through a total mobilization of the different resources of human personality. . . . An integral vision of reality implies two things: first, immediate contact with the inmost nature of existence in its manifold richness of content; secondly, an integration of such

different provinces of experience as commonsense, science, art, morality, religion, and the like, in the light of one's immediate insight into the heart of reality. The common name for this immediate insight or direct contact with ultimate reality is spiritual intuition. Spiritual intuition or mystic realization may, however, often be carried to such an extreme, that the world of plurality seems to it an unreal appearance, void of intrinsic significance. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, the fullness of spiritual realization brings about a re-affirmation of the world of plurality on a deeper foundation, a re-integration of the different provinces of human experience in a comprehensive truth-vision.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Haridas Chaudhuri, *The Philosophy of Integralism* (Calcutta: Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, 1954), pp. viii-ix.



## 7.

## JAINISM

IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA, COMING from a common source and responding to similar social conditions, should themselves display a family resemblance, the differences among them being largely of degree and of emphasis. So it is with Jainism.

The word Jain, or Jaina, is derived from jina, the conqueror or victorious one, and is a Sanskrit adjective. It refers to Mahavira Vardhamana, who flourished in the 6th century B.C., shortly before the birth of the Buddha. He left home as a youth and spent thirty years teaching and wandering back and forth across North India, until he attained nirvana. His life is thus very like that of the Buddha, and he regarded the world around him with doubts much the same as the Buddha's.

As each religion, in the course of becoming established, tries to anchor itself in time by gathering to itself an illustrious and mythic past, so too Jainism attributes most of its doctrines to Parshva Natha, who flourished about 800 B.C., and ultimately to Nemi Natha, who is dated about 5000 B.C. and was a cousin of the god Krishna. Nemi Natha left the world to dedicate his life to a search for truth. He was impelled on this course when he heard some goats wailing on the way to the slaughterhouse, and experienced the feeling of sympathy with pain. The basic doctrine of Jainism is that one should hurt nothing and should avoid causing any suffering.

From these progenitors descend the rest of the twenty-four leaders, or Tirthankara, who are not gods, but are worshipped as such. Jainism conceives of time as a double spiral; one part descending or diminishing, the other rising or augmenting, but both existing simultaneously. The series of Tirthankara is complete; the leaders

represent the descending spiral and none can be added. Worship of them consists chiefly of anointment of their statues with unguents, wherever they occur.

Mahavira is generally considered the fountainhead of Jainism, and was the twenty-fourth and last of the Tirthankara. He was of the Kshatriya caste, as was the Buddha. As uncles, he numbered, so we are told, six kings and one ascetic. When he entered his mother's womb, she saw fourteen dream-images; an elephant, a bull, a lion, the ablution of the goddess Lakshmi, a garland of flowers, the moon, the sun, a flag, a pitcher, a lotus pond, a sea, a heavenly chariot, heaps of jewels, and a smokeless fire. These are all Jaina symbols. According to Jaina scripture, if a mother sees these fourteen dreams her child will be either an emperor or a Tirthankara.

Mahavira was reared as a prince and betrothed to Yasoda, though the Digambar Community of Jainas maintains that he did not marry, but remained celibate. At the age of twenty-eight he became an ascetic, though he remained in the palace. At the age of thirty he renounced the world, became a sramana, and began his wanderings with the following vow:

From now on to the end of my life, I will observe equality towards all creatures; I will not do anything sinful either with my mind or speech or body, nor will I get it done by anybody, nor approve of any such thing done by others; I repent of all the sins I have committed up to now and desist from them.<sup>1</sup>

He initiated himself, as is the custom of Tirthankaras.

According to Jaina scripture, knowledge is of five kinds: knowledge acquired by the mind and the senses; from books or teaching; inner knowledge; psychological or subjective knowledge; and ultimate truth. The last three are forms of spiritual knowledge. Mahavira was born possessed of the first three, acquired the fourth at his initiation, and the fifth was the ultimate goal of his search.

He devoted himself to austerities, including deliberate neglect of his body for twelve years and the endurance of pain coupled with feelings of forgiveness. Needless to say he was tempted by numerous devils. After twelve years he took a vow that he would break his fast, which he then began, only when an enslaved princess with shaven head and fettered feet, in tears, and exhausted by three days

<sup>1</sup> Puranchand Samsookha, *Lord Mahavira, the Jaina Prophet* (Madras: Kuber Enterprises Ltd., n.d.), p. 11.

fasting, would offer him boiled pulse from the corner of a window. This sort of obscure, difficult, and detailed stipulation is meritorious to the Jainas, since the collusion of circumstances involved is the more favorable in being less accidental when it occurs. After twelve years of such existence, Mahavira attained "absolute knowledge." He had become a Tirthankara. His first definitive act was to break the tradition of speaking Sanskrit, and to use the vernacular in preaching. Thus the whole body of Jaina scriptures is written in dialect.

The rest of Mahavira's spiritual mission was a steady triumph, beginning with the conversation of hostile Brahmins and ending with the mass conversions of, among others, the twenty-five sons and thirteen queens of the King of Rajgir. A monastic community was established, whose monks and nuns were obliged to take the five major vows: nonviolence (ahimsa), truth, non-stealing, continence, and non-attachment. It was basic doctrine that the only condition essential to salvation was human birth. Disciples and schismatics developed even in Mahavira's lifetime. It is said that he died in the seventy-second year of his age, in 527 B.C.

In the fourth month of that four-month period, in the seventh fortnight, on the fatal night of the fifteenth day of the dark half of the month, Lord Mahavira, the great sramana, breathed his last, passed away from this world, departed above, never to return again. Rending asunder the bonds of birth, decrepitude and death, he became self-fulfilled, illumined, and liberated, rid of all Karma, secure in the ultimate liberation and immune to all suffering.<sup>2</sup>

Those who were with him, thinking that the light of knowledge had departed from the world, symbolically lit candles, as a sign that that light still existed. This act gave rise to the ceremony of Deepavali, or the feast of lights, by which the anniversary of Mahavira's passing is still marked.

He had eleven disciples, one of whom, Sudharma, committed the Angas, or religious scriptures of Jainism, to writing.

Central to Indian belief is the karma-driven wheel of samsara, the doctrine of reincarnation, and the search for liberation from it. All Indian religions deal with this problem in their various ways. None deny it. The essence of the Jaina attitude is summed up in the words of Mahavira:

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<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 32.

Those who are addicted to sense enjoyments do violence to the creatures of earth, to the creatures of water, to the creatures of air, to the creatures of fire, to the jivas of the vegetable kingdom, and to mobile beings. Such violence brings evil to them and is an obstacle to true knowledge. Therefore, O Man, reflect and attain knowledge<sup>3</sup> (Acharanga Sutra). It is extremely difficult to have human birth. The time that passes never returns. Death surprises us at any time, in our childhood, in our old age, or even when we are in the mother's womb. The hawk swoops suddenly upon the partridge. Therefore make every effort to attain true knowledge before it is too late. (Sutrakritanga Sutra)<sup>4</sup>

In Christian ethics we are to be liberated from death but once; in India, the search is to liberate the soul from continual death and re-birth. Since the soul is seldom born into a human body, which alone can achieve escape from the wheel of samsara, the chance for salvation is not to be taken lightly, and one must proceed with prudence. Even asceticism may lead us astray for it may be only a form of vanity.

Many become ascetics . . . but because they fail to root out the desires of the heart, rather than being liberated from the wheel of Karma, they become all the more entangled in it. (Sutrakritanga Sutra)<sup>5</sup>

For men floating on the tides of life and death, the island of religion is the best refuge, goal and support. . . . He who departs this world without practising such a religion suffers from various ills and afflictions in the next life. (Uttaradhyayana Sutra)<sup>6</sup>

But basically:

He who himself hurts the creatures, or gets them hurt by others, or approves of hurt done by others, augments the world's hostility to himself. (Sutrakritanga Sutra)<sup>7</sup>

This doctrine of indirect responsibility, with its social implications and controls, is very different from the main body of Hindu doctrine, which insists on the salvation of the self, whereas it remains impossible really to alter the fate of others.

Regarding all creatures that are attached to life as his own self, let no spiritual seeker, who has given up all fear and enmity, inflict any injury on them. (Uttaradhyayana Sutra)<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-44.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-42.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

The essence of the wisdom of a wise man lies in this that he hurts no creature: to be equal minded to all creatures and regard them as one's own self is Ahimsa (non-violence). Learn this noble virtue. (Uttaradhyayana Sutra)<sup>9</sup>

And then again:

It is desire alone that is the root of the suffering of the whole world, including even the gods. The spiritual seeker, who gives up his attachment to it, is delivered from all sufferings, spiritual and mental. (Uttaradhyayana Sutra)<sup>10</sup>

In this connection it is several times pointed out that:

It is not possible to stop the sounds that enter your ears; forms that come before your eyes; smells that come into your nose; tastes that you feel upon your palate; touch of objects upon your body; but you should renounce all attraction and repulsion towards them. (Acharanga Sutra)<sup>11</sup>

Detachment from the sensual world, rather than denial of it, is the Jaina goal, but another sort of detachment, and a more difficult one, is also essential to well-being:

The self is the creator of happiness and suffering, and also their destroyer. It is the self that is one's friend or foe, according as it is engaged in doing good or evil. . . . As an elephant, sunk in a marsh, sees the bank but cannot reach it, so one who is attached to the sense objects, even if he sees the right path or the path or truth, cannot follow it. (Uttaradhyayana Sutra)<sup>12</sup>

The doctrines of Mahavira were not set down in writing until the end of the 4th century B.C., having until that time been transmitted by memory. It was also in the 4th century that the Jainas split into Digambaras and Svetambaras, the former a strict and the latter a more accommodating sect, both of which still persist. The texts were not codified in final form until either 544 A.D., according to one conventional date, or 514 A.D. according to modern scholarship. The Digambaras, on the other hand, maintain that the texts were written down in A.D. 57. The matter is thus cloudy, and is made still cloudier by the Jaina tradition that the scriptures were sunk in boat-loads by Sankara Acharya, the Vedantist, in 789 A.D., a few only surviving in Nepal and Mysore. Certainly a revival of Jainism got

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

under way at about this time. The written scripture is based upon three basic tenets:

1. That Man *can* attain divinity, and that God is only the highest, noblest, and fullest manifestation of all the powers that lie latent in the soul of man.

2. That the universe may be regarded from many points of view, a belief that led to the development of Jaina logic, with its five-element syllogism.

3. That in ethics, the most important branch of Jaina doctrine, conduct must be guided by ahimsa, or the non-hurting of any kind of life, no matter what form that life may take.

The basic theological content of Jainism, based upon these three principles, is in essence quite simple. It holds first that man's nature is dual, having both material and spiritual existence, each containing both living and dead matter. This tenet is in striking contrast to the Hindu doctrine of Brahman, which would have it that one soul embraces all appearances. Second, Jainism conceives that man is not perfect, but that he can, in his soul, attain perfection. Perfection is the soul's true nature, unencumbered by error; it consists of infinite perception, knowledge, power, and bliss. By his spiritual nature man can control his material nature, and if he does so, he becomes a liberated soul, or jina (conqueror). Free souls are of two kinds, those who have attained nirvana; and those who are still embodied, called Arhats. The third concept is that Man alone is responsible for all that is good or bad in his life. The singular rigor and purity of Jaina ethics may be directly attributed to the belief that man is totally responsible for himself, and partially responsible for others, insofar as it is essential for him to avoid doing any harm to others.

Within the metaphysical structure of their religion, Jainas believe in the soul, jiva, and the non-soul, or ajiva. The distinction is not a true dichotomy, for in practice the jiva contains ajiva elements, and the ajiva, jiva elements, depending upon one's point of view. It is only from our own consciousness that we derive the conception of the two as disparate. Nor are souls limited to man, but inhabit mineral bodies, water, fire, the air, the vegetable kingdom, and indeed all living matter. The chief characteristic of the soul is the possession of consciousness. The soul is immaterial and immortal.

Jainism also claims that both change and permanence exist, each



as actual as the other; and this duality, too, in Indian thought, is most unusual. Most Hindus believe only in permanence; and the Buddhists only in change. The Jainas deny no facts or phenomena, and accept reality as something existing in itself. Thus the soul, as such, is permanent, but its condition can and does change. The soul is the only substance that has consciousness. The other substances, such as time, matter, space, and the conditions of motion and stationariness, or permanence, do not have consciousness.

It is the characteristic of the Jainas to have both a highly abstract metaphysical and theological structure, with a cult of enlightened beings who are not Gods; and also a firm and reasonable system of ethics. For example, the Indian Penal Code drafted by Lord Maccauley contains 23 chapters and 511 sections, covering every conceivable crime. The Jainas claim that the five minor rules of Jaina conduct cover the same ground. Certainly they have the lowest criminal rate in India.

These five minor vows are as follows: The Jaina should not wilfully destroy any kind of life; must not tell a lie; must not use another person's property without the owner's consent; must be chaste; must limit his necessities of life and avoid the use of food that involves unnecessary killing of living beings. He should also observe worship, limit self-indulgence, keep fast on certain days, and daily give charity the form of knowledge, medicine, comfort, and food.

If he is strict, he must abstain from intoxicants, flesh food, fruits likely to contain insects; give up at least eatables during the night; drink filtered water; abstain from gambling, hunting, adultery, and lasciviousness; and refrain from making his living by agriculture, learning, trade, the army, crafts, singing, or music. In practice such injunctions to abstain are, however, tempered by common sense, in such forms as: "Do not destroy life, unless it is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of a higher kind of life." The same principles apply to social intercourse, but on the other hand one has to do one's duty, and since the king or judge is compelled by duty to hang a murderer, such an act is condoned.

Jagmenderlal Jaini in his *Outlines of Jainism* has a summary that may be useful. "It must be noticed," he says, "that, as faith is the first, ritual is the last part of religion in its widest sense. Faith brings us to truth; philosophy makes us grasp it; ethics makes us practice it; and ritual makes us one with it." Jaina worship is extremely simple.

The Jaina temples chiefly contain statutes of the 24 Tirthankaras, ranged along a wall. These are, as we have said, not gods, but only respected leaders, worshipped for their attainment of enlightenment. On the other hand, with the exception of Mahavira, they cannot exactly be regarded as ordinary mortals either, for their histories are prodigious. The first Tirthankara, Rishabha, is reputed to have lived 840,000 years; and Nemi Natha, the twenty-second, to whom is ascribed much Jaina wisdom, for 1,000, and Nemi Natha was forty cubits in height.

The statues of the Tirthankaras are made of white alabaster, since transparent alabaster is, in Jaina cosmology, an unearthly material, or partly spiritualized matter. The carving is usually somewhat crude.

Worship consists in anointing all the projections of the statues; the nose, knees, hands, eyes, and breasts, with colored saffron paints, beginning with the twenty-fourth Tirthankara and ending with the first. An attendant follows immediately behind the worshipper, carrying a bucket and a sponge, to wash off the paint. This practice does not disturb the worshipper, for whom the act is meritorious, not its subsequent fate. Thus, too, in New York, when a hero is received in a ticker tape parade, no one is disturbed by the water trucks of the city street cleaners that, a few yards behind the paraders, efficiently remove the evidence of their wastepaper enthusiasm.

The other form of worship consists of offerings of flowers. To a people so concerned with non-violence, indeed, no other offering would be possible. The Kalighat temple in Calcutta contains a slaughterhouse for goats, but this contradiction is explained by the principle that, since the taking of life is evil, it should, if it must be done, be supervised by a priest. The Kalighat temple contains a sacred image in black stone of Kali, with shining red eyes, which may be observed only through a slit in a thick wall. In order to gain such a glimpse, one must make a floral offering. I once endeavored to go through this ritual, but I made the mistake of carrying the flowers in my hands, which unsanctified them, and so had to begin all over again. The vendors—and flower vendors surround an Indian temple as among us they do a cemetery—lifted the flowers with wooden pincers and placed them on a square banana leaf. This time I made the mistake of smelling them. In smelling them I stole their essence, which should have gone to the goddess, the scent of

flowers being proper to the Gods. So, once more I had to begin the process. Flowers wither rapidly in India because of the heat. They are placed on wooden or metal mandala-shaped stands before the religious cult-object, and a temple servant passes by from time to time, sprinkling them with water, until they wilt and it is time for them to be thrown out. The attendants in Jaina temples are paid non-Jaina janitors, for it is an ancient law that no Jaina may earn a living by the practice of his religion, just as certain western synagogues employ non-Jews, who are less hampered by ritual prohibitions in the performance of their duties than Jews would be.

It is clear that Jainism is a faith of great purity. Its first principle is that of *ahimsa*, or the avoidance of causing injury, which leads strict Jainists to wear a gauze mask before their mouths, so that they will not kill small insects by chance, and leads to a restraint in action that prevents them from committing almost all acts of violence or cruelty. Second, the *syadvada*, or theory of the highest respect for the opinions of others, sees all judgments to be relative and performed from a certain angle. It is a matter of perspective, preventing us from damning anything insofar as we can never absolutely know its nature, and is an excellent social control. To all judgments the Jaina would add the word *syat*, a conditional phrase meaning somehow, in a way, in such a case, or perhaps. In part he is practicing verbal magic, the equivalent of our efforts to protect our future actions when we plan them by saying, "God willing." Jainism thus implies a humble awareness of human limitations.

The philosophical development of the idea of *syadvada* led the Jainas to reject the fallacy of using absolutely definitive statements that exclude shades of meaning, for they wished to avoid *ekanta vada*, or one-sidedness, in viewing the cause of anything. Their actions are thus morally controlled, because deprived of the blindness of moral absolutism, and because dictated by something most essential and in line with Schweitzer's "reverence for life."

Today the Jainas are geographically widespread, even penetrating deep into the Deccan. Their early dissemination does much to explain their division into two sects; the Svetambaras, or those dressed in white, who are less austere than the Digambaras; and those who are dressed in the direction of the sky, which is to say, nudists. The Digambaras reject all temple worship and idolatry, and believe that no female being can ever obtain salvation in a female

incarnation. In naked groups they wander all over India, marching in tens of thousands to various festivals. They are, so to speak, the fundamentalists. The Svetambaras are less strict.

There are today a million and a half Jainas, who exert an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. The reason is chiefly that, forbidden by their own religion to engage in agriculture, they were forced into commerce and trade, where they grew extremely rich. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, estimated that half the mercantile wealth of India passed through the hands of the Jaina laity. In addition, Mohandas Gandhi the reformer and political leader, adopted many Jaina principles into his actions and philosophy.

When we ask ourselves whether Jainism is a religion or an ethical system, we have much the same problem we shall encounter with Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. If it is the purpose of a religion to realize Ultimate Being, the Miracle or Mystery of Being, then certainly Jainism is a religion by that definition. And if the purpose of religion is to raise Man, as far as that may be possible, into communion with, and ultimately into oneness with, the nature of that Being, then again Jainism is a religion. In pure Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Jainism we are confronted with systems in which the religious insight directly produces a system of ethics or social conduct. Though Jainism is by no means without its pantheon and its mythology, it might, in its direct relation to the object of religion or the Being of Being, be compared to Christianity without the intervention of St. Paul. That is, it is a system of ethical behavior directly based upon a spiritual insight into the Being of Being that it has kept consistently in view by not developing an elaborate ritual. One of its chief distinctions, and perhaps its most meaningful accomplishment, is that, though it places emphasis upon personal salvation, this salvation can be accomplished only by social consideration for others.

## 8.

## BUDDHISM

THE BIRTHDATE OF THE BUDDHA, 563 B.C., IS ONE OF THE safest recorded dates of ancient history, but apart from that we know little about the historic life of the Buddha or the dates of early Buddhist development. The only recorded sentence in ancient tradition is so brief that it may be easily repeated:

"The ascetic or monk of the Sakhya clan, Gautama Siddhartha, when he was still young and in possession of his bodily and mental capacities, left home in order to find enlightenment in the wilderness. The Monk of the Sakhya clan, Gautama Siddhartha, while he was still young and could have lived a life of comfort, and though his parents cried and did not want to let him go, abandoned the home to go out and search for enlightenment in the wilderness." This testimony is all we have.

Later times, because of the accumulation of a tradition, knew or thought to know a great deal more about the Buddha than this scanty information conveys. The Buddha biographies date from a period 500 years or more after the birth of the Buddha, and are mythical. It is impossible to resolve their factual content, for, as has been demonstrated many times by clinical experiment, any tale changes utterly in its word-of-mouth repetition, becoming almost unrecognizable with the passage of time. The human mind likes circumstantial detail and suspense, and the storyteller supplies them even when they are not there, out of his own invention, and then passes them on to the next storyteller, who embroiders still more. Thus the story of the Buddha, which originates in the simple statement that a young man left his home to search for enlightenment, is soon encysted in infinite detail. It is even predated, by supplying a legendary background to his conception and birth. Much

the same thing happened, in the Christian tradition, with the birth of Jesus. So Mark tells us of Jesus' actions in maturity; Luke tells us of the birth of Jesus; and St. John, even later, traces the conception and birth of Jesus back to Divine cause, in the primordial Logos. In the case of the gospel writers, the process took at most a hundred years.

Five hundred years after the event, the Buddha's followers seemed to know a great deal about the heavenly events that led to the birth of the Buddha. Thus we read in the introduction to the *Jataka* tales, that in the city of the gods, the Buddha uproar, as it is called, took place.

For there are three uproars, which take place in the world—the Cyclic-Uproar; the Buddha-Uproar, and the Universal-Monarch-Uproar.

This first uproar occurs every hundred thousand years, when the earth is destroyed and recreated. All the deities of heaven:

... wander about through the world, with hair let down and flying in the wind, weeping and wiping away their tears with their hands, and with their clothes red and in great disorder.

Then:

The guardian angels of the world wander about, proclaiming: "Sirs, after the lapse of a thousand years a Buddha will arise in the world." This is the Buddha uproar.

Lastly, the terrestrial deities wander about, proclaiming:

Sirs, after the lapse of a hundred years a universal monarch is to arise in the world. And this is called the Universal Monarch Uproar. And these three are mighty uproars.

When of these three uproars they hear the sound of the Buddha-Uproar the gods of all ten thousand worlds come together into one place, and having ascertained what particular being is to be the Buddha, they approach him, and beseech him to become one. But it is not till after omens have appeared that they beseech him.<sup>1</sup>

This, incidentally, is the ritual whereby the Dalai Lama of Tibet is chosen. In short, the gods consult the oracles, who predict that a Buddha, or enlightened one, is about to appear. Since the gods are not omniscient, they are eager to be taught how to overcome samsara, the cycle of incessant rebirth that is incessant pain. They know the future Buddha is incarnate in the thirteenth, or

<sup>1</sup> Henry Clarke Warren, ed., *Buddhism in Translations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915), pp. 39-40.



highest, Tusita heaven. This being, who is not yet the Buddha, when approached enters into deep meditation, and when he returns from this state confirms what the devas have told him. But it is not because they have told him, but by his meditation, that he realizes he is destined to be reborn on earth as the Buddha. He investigates further to discover where and under what circumstances he will be born for this purpose.

Here we have a small residue of the attitude of the Buddha Gautama himself, who never took anything on trust, and discouraged his students from following any doctrine on faith alone, but exhorted them to find it out for themselves. In this legend he follows his own advice even before he is born.

As he investigates, he discovers he is to be born on earth into the Kshatrya or warrior caste, for as legend tells us, a future Buddha is always born into the caste that at the time of his birth is considered the most meritorious. So, incidentally, we learn that 500 years after the birth of the Buddha it was the warrior and not the Brahmin caste that ranked highest, the priests having fallen from supreme favor by reason of their greed and corrupt practices.

The Buddha endeavors to discover the lifespan of his future mother, and only after he has discovered that she will survive his birth by only nine days does he agree that he has found the right place in which to incarnate himself. It is easier for us to understand the reason for his decision than it would have been for the ancients: he wishes to avoid that most confining of our relations, that with the mother. He wishes to keep both himself and his mind free.

At this point the Buddha, or rather, the higher being who is to be the Buddha, undergoes some strange metamorphoses. He enters the womb of Queen Maya in the shape of a white elephant. The elephant pushes its tusk into the right side of the Queen, and thus she conceives. This event is the equivalent of the Christian parthenogenesis; for since the child is to be divine, the supposed father, being mortal, cannot be the actual father. Enlightenment cannot come by mortal means. It falls as the comet from heaven. Thus most religions have in them somewhere a myth of divine birth.

The Queen has experienced this conception in a dream. The king, hearing of her dream, calls his court astrologers. They tell him that the child will either become a world-conquering monarch, or, should

he renounce the world, a world-saving Buddha, destined to bring the doctrine of enlightenment to men.

Queen Maya carries the child in her womb not for nine, but for ten months, since the incubation period of a divine child is usually longer than that of an ordinary human one. Shortly before the birth of the child, Queen Maya decides to visit her parents. This again is a common trait of such myths: the child should not be born at the home of its parents, but in a neutral place, for the Divine is never domesticated or settled in this world, and its impact, or birth, is somehow outside the usual established pattern of events. In the words of Jesus, "The Foxes have holes . . . but the Son of Man has no place to lay down his head."

On the way to visit her parents Queen Maya feels birthpangs, and stops in a grove of trees miraculously in flower out of season, where she gives birth in a standing position, one of the trees having lowered a branch to support her, not from below, but from above, as symbolic of heavenly intercession. Despite the fact that the Buddha referred to the human body as a skinbag full of dirt, his own birth is bloodless and totally clean. Nevertheless, the gods send out angels and messengers to carry the royal child to heaven, where they wash it. In nine days the Queen dies, and Siddhartha, the personal name of the Buddha, is raised by one of the other wives of his mortal father. This upbringing perhaps explains the belief that Mahaprajapati or great nature, the woman who reared the Buddha, was his aunt or the sister of his mother, since in India the wives of a man are called his sisters.

As the Buddha grew he was taught all the royal arts of archery, tournament, and sportive games; and his father, who knew that should the child develop any resignation about life he would leave home in order to become a Buddha, tried to prevent his child from seeing any of the negative aspects of existence. He built three palaces to house the prince at the different seasons of the Indian year, the hot, the rainy, and the cool, so that he might always live in comfort. These palaces were surrounded by huge fenced gardens, so that Siddhartha was not aware that he was a quasi-prisoner, for he had everything a royal child could demand within the three enclosures. This idea is perhaps symbolic of the fact that we are all somehow prisoners within the narrow limits of the life-circumstances that are

acceptable to us. As the boy grew, the father arranged for his wedding, choosing an eligible princess from a related royal house. The marriage took place and a child was born to Siddhartha. As the child was born Siddhartha said, "Rahula is born to me." Rahula means shackles, and the remark was a first insight into the awakening soul of the Buddha, a desire to remove one's self from the shackles of earthly existence, or *samsara*.

The Buddha's further awakening is shown in the well-known stories of the four carriage rides:

Then said the king, "What shall my son see to make him retire from the world?"

"The four signs."

"What four?"

"A decrepit old man, a diseased man, a dead man, and a monk."<sup>2</sup>

The Buddha is protected from these four, but he wishes to know the world fully by taking a ride out of the palace gates into the city. His father at first is horrified, for the Buddha may glimpse the negativity of life. But the prime minister, the Brahmin Udayin, warns the king not to put difficulties in the way of the prince, lest he become resentful. After all, says the prime minister, the trip can be carefully arranged to prevent the prince from seeing any of the negativities of earthly life. Thus the city of Kapilavattu is elaborately decorated and the ride is planned six months in advance with the royal way well guarded by the police, who remove all the old, the infirm, and the beggars.

Now on a certain day the future Buddha wished to go to the park, and told his charioteer to make ready the chariot. Accordingly the man brought out a sumptuous and elegant chariot, and adorning it richly, he harnessed to it four state-horses of the Sindhava breed, as white as the petals of the white lotus, and announced to the future Buddha that everything was ready. And the future Buddha mounted the chariot, which was like to a palace of the gods, and proceeded towards the park.

"The time for the enlightenment of prince Siddhartha draweth nigh," thought the gods: "we must show him a sign," and they changed one of their number into a decrepit old man, broken-toothed, grey-haired, crooked and bent of body, leaning on a staff, and trembling, and showed him to the future Buddha, but so that only he and the charioteer saw him.

Then said the future Buddha to the charioteer, in the manner related in the Mahapadana,

"Friend, pray, who is this man? Even his hair is not like that of other

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 53.

men." And when he heard the answer, he said, "Shame on birth, since to every one that is born old age must come." And agitated in heart, he thereupon returned and ascended his palace.

"Why has my son returned so quickly?" asked the king.

"Sire, he has seen an old man," was the reply, "and because he has seen an old man, he is about to retire from the world."

"Do you want to kill me, that you say such things? Quickly get ready some plays to be performed before my son. If we can but get him to enjoying pleasure, he will cease to think of retiring from the world." Then the king extended the guard to half a league in each direction.

Again, on a certain day, as the future Buddha was going to the park, he saw a diseased man whom the gods had fashioned; and having again made inquiry, he returned, agitated in heart, and ascended his palace. (*In some versions a leper.*)

And the king made the same inquiry and gave the same orders as before; and again extending the guard, placed them for three-quarters of a league around.

And again on a certain day, as the future Buddha was going to the park, he saw a dead man whom the gods had fashioned; and having again made inquiry, he returned, agitated in heart, and ascended his palace. (*In some versions a funeral procession.*)

And the king made the same inquiry and gave the same orders as before; and again extending the guard, placed them for a league around.

And again on a certain day, as the future Buddha was going to the park, he saw a monk, carefully and decently clad, whom the gods had fashioned; and he asked his charioteer, "Pray, who is this man?"

Now although there was no Buddha in the world, and the charioteer had no knowledge of either monks or their good qualities, yet by the power of the gods he was inspired to say, "Sire, this is one who has retired from the world"; and he thereupon proceeded to sound the praises of retirement from the world. The thought of retiring from the world was a pleasing one to the future Buddha, and this day he went on until he came to the park. The repeaters of the Bigha, however, say that he went to the park after having seen all the four signs on one and the same day.<sup>3</sup>

According to another version, it is after the funeral that the carriage, instead of returning to the palace, is taken to the pleasure gardens, and at each revolution of the wheels Siddhartha seems to hear them say, "One has to die, one has to die." The pleasure gardens are crowded with courtesans and beautiful women, but, so we are told, Siddhartha walks through them as a male elephant walks through a herd of female elephants at a time not the rutting season. He does not even notice them, for he has learned one has to die.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., p. 57.

Udayin, the Brahmin prime minister, has foreseen something like this, so he meets the Buddha in the pleasure garden and tells him his duty is to enjoy himself, out of filial respect towards his father, whether he likes it or not, and that he must at least give the appearance of pleasure. Secondly, if he shows the outward signs of pleasure, then he should feel them inwardly as well. If he does not, it is still his duty as a prince to pretend that he does, for the edification of his people. Also, the ladies are beautiful; their beauty is the divine spark of Brahma. It is necessary that we recognize the divine quality of beauty when we see it, as much as we should recognize the divine quality of deep thought. While Udayin is speaking, Siddhartha does not listen, for he only hears the incessantly repeated truth that one must die.

Siddhartha retires to his palace, and later on makes the fourth carriage ride, according to this alternate version, during which he meets a sannyasi, a Yogi in a yellow gown with a blissful expression on his face.

He stops his carriage and questions the man, who tells him that his expression of happiness stems from the fact that he has left the world and its delights behind, as though they were a prison, and that he is free and enlightened now. The blissful expression in the sannyasi's eyes changes the Buddha's mind, so that he, too, decides to leave the world behind.

These four rides became one of the principal subjects of Indian Buddhist art as early as the Maurya dynasty (322-185 B.C.), and particularly under the Emperor Asoka, 272-232 B.C., so that we know that the legend and the iconography developed quite early.

After the fourth and decisive ride, the king organized a huge festival, with actors, dancers, and musicians, to divert the brooding mind of Siddhartha. Siddhartha retired from the festivities late, but could not sleep. He went out onto a balcony overlooking the hall where the festival took place, and looking down, saw the entertainers and dancers sleeping below him. In sleep they were not attractive.

They snored, saliva ran from their mouths, and their clothes were in disarray, showing their blemished bodies. Siddhartha said, "The house is on fire," meaning that it was no longer safe for him to remain amid such corrupt worldly surroundings. He determined

to quit his present existence and to become a sannyasi, to search for enlightenment in the wilderness.

Before leaving he wished to say goodbye to his baby, but as he entered his wife's room he saw her arm lying over the face of the child. If he tried to kiss the baby, he would wake his wife, who would surely urge him to stay. So he left without doing so, determined to return later when he had gained enlightenment, in order to teach them, as well as others, what he had learned. He ordered his horseman to saddle a horse, and in the middle of the night rode out of his palace, only to find the gates closed.

Siddhartha, his horse, and the footman all had different reactions to the closed gate. Siddhartha thought: if this gate is closed, I will have to spur my horse to take a big jump in order to clear it, and so win freedom. Kanthaka, the horse, thought: if this gate is closed, I will make a supreme effort and try to clear it. The footman thought: if this gate is closed, I shall climb over it and try to open it from the other side. However, the worries of all three were unnecessary, an illustration of the futility of human worry in the face of nature and destiny, for the devas opened the gates; indeed, with their hands, shown sticking out of the ground on early reliefs of the legend, they even deadened the hoofbeats of the horse, so as to arouse no one in the palace.

We are told that in this one night Siddhartha rode through four kingdoms, and considering the size of some Indian kingdoms, this feat is by no means improbable. At dawn he sent back his horse and footman. The horse was so sad that he died on the spot of a broken heart, according to one version; according to another, the footman and horse returned to the palace, which they found in mourning. Siddhartha's wife, in a jealous mood, accused her husband of having deserted her for the superior attractions of the angels in heaven.

As Siddhartha dismissed his footman and horse, he took his sword and cut off the tuft of hair on top of his head. He threw it up into the air, saying, "If this hair will not return, I will gain enlightenment in the course of my Yoga experiment; if it falls down at my feet, I shall not succeed." His worries again were unnecessary: all the devas in heaven were waiting to receive the thrown hair, which they cherished as a great relic, building for it in Heaven the first temple or "stupa," of which all stupas on earth are replicas. Thus



mythological thinking reverses historical facts, by predating archetypical situations.

Gautama, alone and garbed in the gown of an ascetic, joined various societies of old men in the forest, where he learned one system of philosophy after another. Each time, after a short period, he had learned all that any particular group had to tell him, he left it in the typically polite way of the Indian philosopher, who does not judge another as wrong, but instead allows each system its proper relative place. As Siddhartha left each assembly, he would say, "You are all great sages in the style of the great and wonderful past. I venerate your doctrine. However, I feel my way is different from yours. I live, as it were, in a different time, and in another consciousness, and so need to discover my own solution to my problem." The men he consulted also declined to blame him for leaving them, saying, "If this is so, it is certainly better that you leave and attempt to find your enlightenment in your own way."

Finally Siddhartha joined five other monks with whom he practiced Hathayoga, the most severe of ascetic exercises, and with them he practiced the asanas and breathing exercises. These yogis went to such extremes that they virtually starved themselves. From the Gupta period (about 300 A.D.) we have a sculpture that shows us the Buddha at this period of his life, unnaturally emaciated, for it is said that he reduced his diet to one grain of rice a day. Such representations are exceedingly rare. As the Buddha lost his physical strength, he also lost the ability to think deeply and clearly, so he decided that the way of extreme asceticism was not the noble way, or the correct procedure for gaining enlightenment. Therefore he renounced asceticism.

In reaction against extreme asceticism, no less than against princely self-indulgence, Siddhartha developed what was later to be known as "the middle path," a neat avoidance of both extremes. He rose from his ascetic posture and decided to restore his bodily structure in order to continue once more with higher Yoga discipline. The five monks who had been ascetics with him drew away, saying, "Sakyamuni Siddhartha Gautama has left the good way of living. We shall leave him and go on with our exercises."

Finally restored to normal strength, Siddhartha decided it was time to continue his quest, so he took his seat under the famous Bo tree of Buddhagaya, near the River Ganges, and about a hundred

miles east of Benares. As he sat down, he took a vow not to rise from this asana, or sitting posture, unless and until he had found ultimate enlightenment and an answer to the problem of amṛta, or deathlessness. The tree at Uruvela, under which the great night of enlightenment occurred, has been the goal of innumerable pilgrimages undertaken from that day to this. From the tree the Emperor Asoka sent shoots to various places in Southeast Asia, to Siam, Ceylon, and elsewhere. Asoka, who lived about 250 B.C., worshipped the Bo tree so ardently that his wife became jealous and had the tree cut down. The emperor ordered men to wet the remaining roots with buffalo milk. The treatment was successful. The flame-shaped leaf of the Bo tree is as famous among Buddhists as the pilgrim's shell of *Compostella* was among Christians. The leaf certainly resembles the blue ethereal flame that is thought to be visible on the head of a Yogi in the process of reaching samadhi, or the highest state of insight. If we ask whether the Buddha sat under the tree because the shape of the leaf was favorable, or if the tree was chosen later to reinforce the myth with a symbolic image, we shall not get an answer. We might as well ask if Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a white ass deliberately, to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah; or whether his disciples said he did, to fulfill the prophecy; or if Isaiah foresaw the event.

Siddhartha made a vow not to rise until he attained enlightenment. In so doing he obviously offered a challenge to all the demons who would try to prevent him from succeeding. So Mara, the evil principle, from the root *mṛ*, or mors, death—a word we know from amṛta—who at this time was the god of the underworld rather than of infatuation; the deva of hellfire, came to attack Gautama in his resolution. First, Mara sent his three daughters, the nymphs who personified Sexual Love, Seduction, and Infatuation. Siddhartha did not even notice them. When they made their presence obvious, he transformed them into ugly old hags with long teeth and dishevelled yellow hair. Mara was disturbed at the transformation, and felt he must implore Siddhartha to change them back again.

He gave excellent reasons. He said that those who cannot attain enlightenment or see through the appearances of this world have need of the infatuations in order to attain happiness. It would be better, for the sake of others, to restore them. Siddhartha, agreeing, released them from ugliness back to their original beauty. Mara,



PLATE EIGHT

A typical Far Eastern version of the Buddha, expressing his graceful and mild character. From a Chinese fresco.

though mollified, was not through with his temptation of the future Buddha. He called up a herd from hell: all the terrible creatures and demons who served his purpose in the netherworld. It was like a host painted by Bosch or Breughel; a temptation of St. Anthony. Such monsters are universal: they are the primordial shapes of primitive man's fear of the unknown.

These apparitions did not disturb the Buddha, for his aureole, or halo, broke all their attempts to injure him. He was protected by his sanctity and goodness. It is curious, by the way, that nowhere in Oriental legend do hermits suffer from accidia, the hallucinated melancholy without roots that was the besetting blue devil of the Occidental anchorite.

When these monsters failed, Mara, in a fury, himself tried to injure Siddhartha by means of his flowery shaft, an arrow that, like Cupid or Eros, he used to infatuate all beings and to bring them into his power. Mara tempted the Buddha with the power of evil itself. But Mara was one of the gods, and the other devas descended from heaven to intervene. They asked him to halt, for, they said, they were ashamed to see a god fail in his attempt, and so they persuaded Mara to go away.

In that great night Siddhartha became the Buddha, which is to say, the enlightened or awakened one. As the night ended, he rose and was offered milk by a girl who met him. We do not know what sort of milk, but the offering seems to have been a ritual initiation into a new life, or newly gained rebirth.

The Buddha walked with his beggar's bowl to the next village. On the way he was approached once more by Mara, who prostrated himself and implored the Buddha to vanish into nirvana, another word for the samadhi of the Yoga. Mara wished him to take this step, for he feared that the Buddha might spread enlightenment to others, and so establish a path that all might follow who wished to free themselves from Mara's snares. Once more he used excellent arguments. Why should the Buddha bother with men, he said, for men are like the lotus bulbs that gardeners plant in palace ponds, in the mud at the bottom. Some of them are so weak they will never rise, or be able to flower. They will rot in the mud. Some are so strong that they don't need the care of the gardener. They will bloom in glory anyway. So what is the purpose of the gardener, or teacher? If people are either too weak to understand, or so strong

that they will be saved in any event, the teacher wastes his time.

The Buddha listened and thought that there was truth in what Mara said, as indeed there was. The devas in heaven, who had always watched over the life of the Buddha, were now worried as to what would happen, for thousands of Buddhas in the past had withdrawn at this point. They did not wish the Buddha's wisdom to be lost, so they sent down one of the highest of the gods, Brahma himself, who descended with his white umbrella and prostrated himself before the Buddha. He argued both with the Buddha and with Mara. He admitted that what Mara said was true, but added that there were also bulbs of moderate strength, which, if tended, might thrive, but if neglected, would die. These, if the gardener pruned them, fertilized them correctly and tied them up, might develop into the true glory of the strong lotus. So for the sake of these middling beings, those neither too weak to survive nor too strong to be suppressed, the Buddha should consent to preach his doctrine.

The Buddha, not because Brahma persuaded him, but because he thought the matter over and agreed that the statement was true, decided to grant the request of Brahma, the highest god of the Hindu pantheon, and so proceeded towards the city of Benares. As a sacred city, Benares has the special significance that, as the place where Vishnu first set his foot on earth, it partakes not of earthly cities, but of heaven. It is thus doubly sacred, and doubly therefore the proper place to enunciate a new doctrine.

As the Buddha approached the town, he entered the deer park, or amusement ground, which is today Sarnath, one of the holiest pilgrimage places of the Buddhist world. In the park he saw the five ascetic monks he had long ago become disgusted with, sitting under a tree in the distance.

The next day at the end of the second watch, having gone his begging round collecting alms, he, the unequalled one, like Hari, proceeded to the Deer Park.

The five disciples united in a worthy society, when they beheld him, said to one another, "This is Gautama who has come hither, the ascetic who has abandoned his self-control. He wanders about now, greedy, of impure soul, unstable, and with his senses under no firm control, devoted to inquiries regarding the frying-pan. We will not ask after his health, nor rise to meet him, nor address him, nor offer him a welcome, nor a seat, nor bid him enter into our dwelling.

Having understood their agreement, with a smiling countenance,

spreading light all around, Buddha advanced gradually nearer, holding his staff and his begging-pot. Forgetful of their agreement, the five friends, under his constraining majesty, rose up like birds in their cages when scorched by fire. Having taken his begging-bowl and staff, they gave him an arghya, and water for washing his feet and rinsing his mouth; and bowing reverentially they said to him, "Honored Sir, health to thee."

"Health in every respect is ours—that wisdom has been attained which is so hard to be won," so saying, the holy one thus spoke to the five worthy associates: "But address me not as 'Worthy Sir,'—know that I am a jaina,—I have come to give the first wheel of the law to you. Receive initiation from me,—ye shall obtain the place of Nirvana."

Then the five, pure in heart, begged leave to undertake his vow of a religious life; and the Buddha, touching their heads, received them into the mendicant order. Then at the mendicants' respectful request the chief of saints bathed in the tank, and after eating ambrosia, he reflected on the field of the law.<sup>4</sup>

Such is the impact of the saintly person, who is also, in some ways, a commanding person. His mere appearance has worked a miracle and changed their minds. After the Buddha has sat down to one side of the monks, for in ancient India, one does not sit in a circle facing one's fellows, but in a long line facing the master, he begins to preach his first sermon, which is called "The Turning of the Wheel of the Law."

The Buddha thus becomes the turner of the great wheel, a cakravarti, and starts thereby, at this moment, the religion of Buddhism. This sermon every Buddhist, and perhaps every educated person in the world, should know by heart. In it the Buddha preaches the so-called four Aryan truths, Aryan in this sense meaning noble, since it has become a moral rather than an ethnic or anthropological term.

And the Blessed One thus addressed the five monks: "There are two extremes, monks, which he who has given up the world, ought to avoid.

"What are these two extremes? A life given to pleasures, devoted to pleasures and lusts; this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless.

"And a life given to mortifications; this is painful, ignoble, and profitless.

"By avoiding these two extremes, monks, the Tathagata has gained the knowledge of the middle path which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to Sambodhi (*supreme enlightenment*), to Nirvana.

"Which, monks, is this middle path the knowledge of which the

<sup>4</sup> Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLIX, pp. 171-172.



Tathagata has gained, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to Sambodhi, to Nirvana?

"It is the noble eightfold path, namely: right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness, right meditation.

"This, monks, is the middle path the knowledge of which the Tathagata has gained, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to perfect enlightenment, to Nirvana.

"This, monks, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering; decay is suffering; death is suffering; presence of objects we hate, is suffering; separation from objects we love, is suffering; not to obtain what we desire, is suffering.

"In brief, the five aggregates which spring from grasping, they are painful.

"This, monks, is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering: verily it originates in that craving which causes the renewal of becoming, is accompanied by sensual delight, and seeks satisfaction now here, now there; that is to say, craving for pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for not becoming.

"This, monks, is the noble truth concerning the cessation of suffering. Verily, it is passionlessness, cessation without remainder of this very craving; the laying aside of, the giving up, the being free from, the harboring no longer of, this craving.

"This, monks, is the noble truth concerning the path which leads to the cessation of suffering. Verily, it is this noble eightfold path, that is to say, right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness and right meditation.

"As long, monks, as I did not possess with perfect purity this true knowledge and insight into these four noble truths, with its three modifications and its twelve constituent parts, so long, monks, I knew that I had not yet obtained the highest absolute enlightenment in the world of men and gods, in Mara's and in Brahma's world, among all beings, samanas, and brahmanas, gods and men.

"But when I possessed, monks, with perfect purity this true knowledge and insight into these four noble truths, with its three modifications and its twelve constituent parts, then I knew, monks, that I had obtained the highest, universal enlightenment in the world of men and gods, in Mara's and in Brahma's world, among all beings, samanas, and brahmanas, gods and men.

"And this knowledge and insight arose in my mind: The emancipation of my mind cannot be shaken; this is my last birth; now shall I not be born again."

Thus the Blessed One spoke. The five monks were delighted, and they rejoiced at the words of the Blessed One. And when this exposition was propounded, the venerable Kondanna obtained the pure and spotless dhamma-eye (*that is to say, the following knowledge*): "Whatsoever is an arising thing, all that is a ceasing thing."

And as the Blessed One had set going the wheel of the dhamma, the earth-inhabiting devas shouted: "Truly the Blessed One has set going at Benares, in the deer park Isipatana, the wheel of the dhamma, which may be opposed neither by a samana nor by a brahmana, neither by a deva, nor by Mara, nor by Brahma, nor by any being in the world."

Hearing the shout of the earth-inhabiting devas, the four firmament-devas shouted. . . . Hearing their shout the Tavatimsa devas . . . the Yama devas, . . . the Tusita devas . . . the Nimmanarati devas, . . . the Paranimmitavasavatti devas, . . . the Brahma-world devas shouted: "Truly the Blessed One has set going at Benares, in the deer park Isipatana, the wheel of the dhamma, which may be opposed neither by a samana nor by a brahmana, neither by a deva, nor by Mara, nor by Brahma, nor by any being in the world."

Thus, in that moment, in that instant, in that second, the shout reached the Brahma world; and this whole system of ten thousand worlds quaked, was shaken, and trembled; and an infinite, mighty light was seen through the world, which surpassed the light that can be produced by the divine power of the devas.<sup>6</sup>

So these truths are:

1. The noble truth of suffering. Life is suffering; death is suffering; old age is suffering; disease is suffering; to be connected with what we hate is suffering; to be separated from what we love is suffering.

The absence of conjunctions is noticeable. The conjunctions are rarely used in Indian oral doctrine, for one must pause to consider each statement, and not connect it causally with its neighbors. One has to go step by step, slowly.

2. The noble truth of the origin of suffering. Namely, the craving for life; the craving for enjoyment; the craving for existence as a whole.

3. The noble truth of the cessation of suffering. Namely, the complete rooting out; the thorough destruction; the annihilation of this desire to exist; of the craving for joy.

4. The noble fourth truth, namely, the eightfold noble path that is: right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness, right meditation.

The sermon is patterned according to the system of medicine prevalent at the time of the Buddha. Several times in the history of philosophy medicine has given a decisive impulse to a new type of thinking; as at the time of Hippocrates in Greece, of the Buddha,

<sup>6</sup> "The Mahavagga of the Vinaya Texts," in *The Life of Gotama the Buddha*, E. H. Brewster (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1926), pp. 63-64.

and in our own day, of Freud and his successors, who have all done more to stimulate philosophical thinking than any professional philosophers of their periods.

Medical theory in ancient India followed the following procedure: when the doctor was called to the patient, he went to find if there was a real or a feigned sickness; whether there was really suffering. When the doctor had established that sickness existed, he attempted a diagnosis. What was the cause of suffering and why did it occur? The suffering was there, as Buddha says in the second Aryan truth, because there was a craving or desire for existence that in itself was connected with suffering. Third, the doctor ascertained whether or not the sickness was curable. If the patient was incurable, he must not waste his time in futile efforts to heal him; if he was curable, he would do something about prescribing a medicine or cure. The Buddha's third step assures us that the disease—suffering—is curable, by eradication of the desire that causes the sickness. Thus we reach the fourth or therapeutical answer, the holy eightfold path.

With this sermon the Buddha was launched as a teacher, and, unlike so many other religious leaders, he met not with persecution, but with forty years of success as a highly worshipped and venerated instructor. Of course there were doubting monks and antagonistic rajas. There were even monks who, misunderstanding his doctrine, cut off their heads in order to gain nirvana at once, an act that on the contrary left them stranded in samsara or the wheel of incarnation, reborn and compelled to start all over again. But many who heard his sermons became initiated into the order of monks, the Sangha, which Buddha established. There were lay followers who gave parks and palaces to serve as monastic settlements. The order flourished. Towards the end of the Buddha's life, even women came to him, demanding that he establish an order of nuns, but this request he at first refused to grant. When asked how monks should behave towards women, he said: as though they did not see them. If they did see them, they were not to speak to them, and if they did speak to them, they were to remain wide awake to the dangers that were implicit in such conversation. In this, the Buddha only echoed the opinions about the position of women that were current in his time.

On the last day of the Buddha's life, Mahaprajapati, his step-mother, sent a message to him, imploring him to establish a women's

order. The Buddha relented and established it, but in doing so remarked to his personal attendant, Ananda, who so closely resembles in his position St. John:

But since, Ananda, women now have received that permission, the pure religion, Ananda, will not now last so long, the good law will now stand fast for only five hundred years. Just, Ananda, as houses in which there are many women and but few men, are easily violated by robbers, by burglars; just so, Ananda, under whatever doctrine and discipline women are allowed to go out from the household life into the homeless state, that religion will not last long.<sup>4</sup>

In this prediction perhaps the Buddha underestimated the strength of his doctrine, but overestimated the power of women, for, after 2,500 years, there are at least 500 million practicing Buddhists, though it is true that in India the number is not above 2,000. It seems a more or less stable observation that no religion can long survive its first vigor that does not, when it becomes institutionalized, make its prime appeal to women. Of the two sexes, though not the most creative, they are the better conservators.

The death of the Buddha is a long and beautiful story that tells us in great detail of all that happened when he lay down, tired, supporting his head with his right hand, about to enter nirvana. This is the so-called lion's position to be found everywhere in Buddhist art. Such images, some of them enormous, are kept in excellent repair, for in themselves they stand for the idea of nirvana, or liberation from existence.

A monk approaches the Buddha, wishing to be initiated, but is sent away by the last initiate, who says that he stands in the way of several million devas eager to see the Buddha as he enters nirvana. Finally the Buddha asks the monks whether any of them has any last question, for so long as the teacher is still there, he is willing to answer their doubts. No one speaks, and Ananda, his chief disciple, praises them for their lack of doubt.

The Buddha reproaches him for his praise, telling him, "You say so, because no one raises his hand. In my inner vision, I alone realize how clearly their minds are free from doubt." Then, with the words, "All composite things are subject to decay; O monks, work out your salvation with diligence," he enters into the various stages of Yoga meditation, the first, second, third, and then the

<sup>4</sup> Brewster, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

fourth, which is called the inner stillness of the immense ocean. After that he passes through other exalted states: the state that is beyond consciousness and is not consciousness, and the state that is beyond all limitations; from these he returns to the beginning, to ordinary daylight consciousness; and then once more he moves through the first, second, third, and fourth. From the inner stillness of the immense ocean, says Ashvaghosha's biography; from that intermediate state, the Buddha immediately expired into nirvana. This statement we may take as an indication of the transcendent character of nirvana, which is beyond all, even the highest states of mental endeavor.

Such, in brief outline, is the partly fabulous story of the life of Gautama Buddha. It has, through the centuries, been amply embroidered with Jataka tales, fables, illustrative anecdote, commentaries, and other elaboration. Now we must turn, not to the details of the life, but to Buddhist doctrine itself.

Buddhism is threefold; it is a religion, it is a philosophy, and it is also a moral, or ethical, system.

The West sometimes seems to feel that it is more a philosophical than a religious system, and naturally, if you examine its history of some 2,500 years, you will find as many philosophies dependent upon Buddhism as, for the last 2,000 years, derive from Christianity. But these philosophies arise relatively late, and what we may ask is if the doctrine of Gautama Buddha is a religion or a philosophy.

Thus we are told of a young monk who has recently joined the religious community and is distressed. Some older monks, or Theras, ask him why he is so depressed. He explains that time and again he has asked the Buddha important philosophical questions: has time a beginning, or an end, or is it without limit; does space have an end, beyond which there is nothing, or does it extend indefinitely; and does an enlightened person who has achieved nirvana exist or not exist? The monk feels that when an honest person knows the answer to a question, he will give it; but the Buddha, when so questioned, remains silent, so that the young man doubts the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Theras say that before the young man decides to leave the Buddha, he should do as an honest man would, and explain his feelings of doubt. Together the young man and the Theras go to the Buddha and approach with courtesy, that is, they walk three times around the Buddha and then sit on his right side. The Buddha

asks them to speak, and repeating everything three times, for this is the correct procedure, they tell of the monk's difficulty.

The Buddha answers, saying, "O monk, when you came to join the community, did I promise that I would explain to you the answers to philosophical questions that intrigue our age and worry you?" The monk replies that the Buddha had not so promised, but that he expected answers anyway.

The Buddha gives his answer in the form of a parable.

It is as if, Malunkya-putta, a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his relatives and kinsfolk, were to procure for him a physician or surgeon; and the sick man were to say, "I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learnt whether the man who wounded me belonged to the warrior caste, or to the Brahmana caste, or to the agricultural caste, or to the menial caste."

Or again he were to say, "I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learnt whether the arrow which wounded me was an ordinary arrow, or a claw-headed arrow, or a vekanda, or an iron arrow, or a calf-tooth arrow, or a karavirapatta." That man would die, Malunkya-putta, without ever having learnt this.

In exactly the same way, Malunkya-putta, any one who should say, "I will not lead the religious life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One shall elucidate to me either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death;"—that person would die, Malunkya-putta, before the Tathagata had ever elucidated this to him.

The religious life, Malunkya-putta, does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal; nor does the religious life, Malunkya-putta, depend on the dogma that the world is not eternal. Whether the dogma obtain, Malunkya-putta, that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal, there still remain birth, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing.

Accordingly, Malunkya-putta, bear always in mind what it is that I have not elucidated, and what it is that I have elucidated. And what, Malunkya-putta, have I not elucidated? I have not elucidated, Malunkya-putta, that the world is eternal; I have not elucidated that the world is not eternal. . . . I have not elucidated that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death. And why, Malunkya-putta, have I not elucidated this? Because, Malunkya-putta, this profits not, nor has to do with the fundamentals of religion, nor tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, the supernatural faculties, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana; therefore have I not elucidated it.

And what, Malunkya-putta, have I elucidated? Misery, Malunkya-putta, have I elucidated; the origin of misery have I elucidated; the cessation of misery have I elucidated; and the path leading to the cessation of mis-



ery have I elucidated. And why, Malunkya-putta, have I elucidated this? Because, Malunkya-putta, this does profit, has to do with the fundamentals of religion, and tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana; therefore have I elucidated it. Accordingly, Malunkya-putta, bear always in mind what it is that I have not elucidated, and what it is that I have elucidated.

*Thus spake the Blessed One, and delighted, the venerable Malunkya-putta applauded the speech of the Blessed One.*<sup>1</sup>

The particular questions that the monk wished to have clarified are the most frequently stated philosophical problems of the time of the Buddha. As such they are objects of mental curiosity, not of spiritual release. For this reason the Buddha once said that the mere reading and studying of medical textbooks never cured any man's disease. For that cure one has to take medicine. In this and many other ways the Buddha stressed that his system was practical, and not theoretical. Therefore we have to draw a clear line of distinction between his message, which nowadays we call Gotamism in contradistinction to the later formulations of Buddhist doctrine, and the philosophical problems that, though built into Buddhist commentary, he did not feel to be pertinent to the problem of liberation.

So, if his system is not a philosophy, we have to decide if it was a moral code. To be sure there are many ethical remarks in his sermons, but can we say that Gotama's major concern was what today we could call moral action? The later developments of Buddhism were often primarily ethical; but then any faith accumulates rules of order for the government of its clergy and followers, and bases these rules upon original doctrine, howsoever interpreted. But on the whole Buddhism in its origins was not a system of ethics, for there is no incentive to social action inherent in any point of Gotamist doctrine.

The Buddha does not urge social improvement. He criticizes the social conditions of his day: the caste system he felt to be highly undesirable. Because of this belief he gives to the terms Brahmin and Aryan a new meaning, decreeing that they are moral rather than social marks of distinction; the man capable of highest truth and loyalty is superior to him who follows only outer practices, initiation rites, and rituals. Thus the Buddha attempted to establish an order based upon moral probity, but he nowhere suggested that any-

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<sup>1</sup> Warren, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-122.

one should change the world for the better. In this respect, he appeared most Indian, for the doctrine of karma, which he largely accepted, made it not only unnecessary but impossible, to change the outer conditions of one's life. That life depended upon previous actions and could be used to ameliorate the next life, but could not be radically changed during its present span.

What could be attempted was an improvement in the soul of Man by effecting a change in the tendency of his thought and his attitude towards existence. Only thus could his lot be improved; but to change the conditions without changing the inner attitude would be meaningless, according to karma doctrine. Thus, though life was far from ideal, the Buddha accepted the social structure, for one cannot wipe out the misery of existence unless one has gained highest enlightenment; an individual, rather than a social, affair. No one is responsible for the karma of his neighbor. It is his own fate that he must assuage. In this Buddhism can scarcely be called an essentially ethical creation, for ethics deal with our mundane reactions to and with others, even when those reactions are inspired by our relations with higher reality, as they are in many systems.

When we ask if Buddhism is a religion, we have only to examine the miraculous aspects of the life of the Buddha, with its devas, divinities, and heavenly events, to perceive that not only is it a religion, but that, with the progress of time, it produced many mutually antagonistic systems, each with a cult, ritual, church organization, and monastic establishments.

But when we ask if Gotamism, the early doctrine of the Buddha himself, upon which these faiths are based, is a religion, we may well remain in some doubt. To define religion is not an easy task. But if we say that a religion is the relationship of man to personalized higher powers called deities, then indeed Gotamism was, in its beginnings, not a religion, since the Buddha worshipped no deities. He was not an atheist, he did not deny the existence of deities, but neither did he worship them; he belittled their importance and did not respect them. He regarded them as luckier than men, and through legend, knew them to be so, but did not consider them ultimately blessed or immortal.

Let us go back to the Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath, the setting in motion of the wheel of the law. This wheel of the law we should compare with the wheel of samsara, which is divided into six sec-

tions; the heavens above, hell below, above, the nature spirits, and below the Pretas, or hungry and suffering spirits of the nether world; together with ferocious carnivorous animals, the less sinful domestic animals, and the ladder of the caste system culminating in the san-niyasis and yogis, who are inferior only to the devas of the thirteen heavens.

In setting in motion his own wheel of the law, or samsara, the Buddha shifted its emphasis slightly. Whereas Hinduism before the Buddha aimed at the zenith, where the heavens are; the Buddha, as it were, turned the wheel 60 degrees, raising man to the highest point, and shifted the lowest point from hell to the region of the carnivorous animals. This shift in emphasis is important, for according to the Buddha it is in man that the ultimate decision takes place, and the fate of future incarnations is decided. Thus it is better to be a man than a god, for though the devas exist indefinitely in paradise, surrounded by pleasures, they have, in being satiated with pleasure, forgotten the necessity for liberation, and are thus still bound to the wheel of samsara. Eventually they will fall from grace and be reincarnated in some lower form, since they can obtain higher form in any event. Man's existence may not be so pleasant, but in having so brief a lifespan, he is constantly reminded of death and reincarnation, and so more eagerly strives for liberation. This condition the Buddha makes clear in another parable. He says that once upon a time a one-eyed yoke with which oxen are harnessed was thrown into the ocean. It was tossed about by the waves, changing its position in the seven oceans. In the oceans there was also a turtle that, in order to take breath, had to put its head out of the water once every day for a few seconds. How often, in the course of the ages, would the turtle, rising to the surface, happen to stick its head through the eye in the one-eyed yoke that was also drifting aimlessly about the ocean?

The monks, with a scientific caution rare even in the West, said that it would happen very rarely; once in a while only throughout the long ages of cosmic development would such an event take place.

The Buddha closed his sermon by saying, "Though it is difficult to believe that the turtle could very frequently put out its head through the one-eyed yoke, oh monk, for a living being to be incarnated as a man is even a rarer event." Therefore the moral fol-

lows, that if you have the fortune to be born as a man, then you had better make good use of so rare an opportunity.

In such a view, the devas are worthier of sympathy than of envy. Similarly the inhabitants of the hells are not necessarily in the lowest incarnation. They perform almost no actions: they chiefly expiate a bad karma incurred in former existences. So that one might say, in this light, that they were already on their way up, insofar as they cannot fall any lower. Any incarnation would be an improvement for them. Hell, to the Buddhist, is almost what Purgatory is to the Christian, in this purgative sense at any rate.

The carnivorous animals are in a much worse moral state, since, living by murder, they condemn themselves to a lower incarnation. Thus the shift in the emphasis of the wheel of *samsara*, under the Buddha's touch.

The Buddha does not deny the existence of the divinities. Even modern scientific psychologists do not deny it, for gods have a strong and permanent subjective reality in the mind of man. Thus the Succubi and Incubi, the delight of the 18th century Venetian theologian Sinistrari, are seen not to be quaint conceits of demonology, but the personified trends of the subconscious. So the Buddha, like most preachers a great psychologist, knows it is useless to deny the existence of the gods, but equally useless either to endeavor to become one, or to worship them highly.

"Once upon a time," said the Buddha, "when there was an involution period and the empty sky was all that there was, between the various periods of world creation, the original mist was evenly distributed, and some of the heavier molecules attracted others to them, became fat and heavy, and the heaviest and most material of them fell down out of the empty Brahma-sky into this universe of ours and became there the first star. Turning on its axis through long aeons, the star finally thought, 'Oh that there were other beings like me, that I would not be alone, the only one.'" This is a quotation from a *Upanishad* text describing the creation of the world by means of the desire of the creator.

"As time went on," said the Buddha, "other molecules became duly material and hungry for the power of existence. They too fell down and became stars. The first star then thought, 'Oh I am the mighty Brahma, because by wishing that there would be other beings I created them, so they are my creatures and I their god.' And

the other stars, finding this star there before them, agreed with the judgment of Brahma. They thought him ultimate, and decided to worship him." Thus the irony of the worship of deities, as sketched by the Buddha.

It is an irony, in that man worships the very beings who, even before he himself fell down from emptiness, became power-hungry, material, base, and low, and therefore were condemned to *samsara* even before man was. In this way the gods exist, but in existing, are not worthy of worship, for they are even more entangled in *samsara* and less capable of liberation than is man himself. It is for this reason that the Buddha is constantly referred to, at the close of reported sermons, as the teacher of gods and men.

We are not quite through with deciding whether or not the original doctrines upon which Buddhism is based might or might not be called a religion. If religion does mean the worship of devas, then it is not. But such a definition of religion is too narrow. There are other things that distinguish the religious thinking of Man, and if one of these, even the chief one, is a grasp of the Miracle of Being that stands beyond all existence, then the Buddha was indeed a deeply religious man, distinguished from Hindu doctrine mainly in a stronger will to refuse to give names and shapes to the Ultimate. For the Buddha, even the word Brahman was too much of an appearance.

The great mystics who preceded the Buddha, during the Vedic age, at the time of the *Upanishads*, and also the great yogis who glimpsed the Ultimate, the Tat, or light of which all things are but the shadow, agreed that it is beyond conceptual reasoning. They did not agree upon remaining silent about the nature of the Ultimate, though they knew that even the *atman* could not be described in psychological terms. In speaking of such matters, they were forced to employ words, and so to scale the Ultimate, no matter how grandly or abstractly, down to human and delusory terms. The Buddha avoided this error. It returns in his devotees and followers, but he himself carefully refrained from ever describing the highest goal to which man can attain, the state of *nirvana*.

In many ways *nirvana* is identical with what earlier systems in India described as *samadhi* or *moksha*. But earlier systems described *samadhi* and *moksha*, and told how one looked when liberated. The Buddha says of *nirvana* only that it is what we ought to strive for,

and when asked for a description, replies only with the already quoted parable of the arrow.

In his refusal lay the cause of the great Buddhist schism into two main sects. Such a refusal to describe the goal of faith is possible, and makes its appeal, only to highly developed and individual minds. If a religion is to become worldly-wise and if it is to be widespread, it must appeal to the general laity. The only way to appeal to the laity is to give it what it wants, and what it wants in general is the highly-detailed promise of a pleasurable future life coupled with a system of rewards and benefits. So Buddhism developed a double stream of doctrine that, in the light of the teachings of Gotama, might be described as heretical and unorthodox, in that both main branches of Buddhism attempt to describe the higher state; the Hinayana Buddhists calling nirvana complete annihilation, the destruction of all that is; and the other, more popular school of Mahayana indulging in lengthy, psychological descriptions of the wonderful heavenly bliss that is nirvana.

The term nirvana is not a Buddhist coinage, but was in use even at the time that the *Upanishads* were set down. The Buddha did not attempt to define it. Instead he told parables:

Then the Exalted One admonished the monks, saying:

Just as monks, the mighty ocean flows down, slides and tends downward gradually, and there is no abrupt precipice, so also in this dhamma-discipline the training is gradual, the action is gradual, the procedure is gradual; there is no abrupt penetration of knowledge. Since this is so . . . this is the first strange and wonderful thing, seeing which monks take delight in this dhamma-discipline.

Just as, monks, the mighty ocean is of a stable nature, since it overpasses not its boundary, even so, monks, my disciples transgress not, even at cost of life, the training enjoined on them by me. Since this is so . . . this is the second strange and wonderful thing. . . .

Just as, monks, the mighty ocean consorts not with a dead body; for when a dead body is found in the mighty ocean it quickly wafts it ashore, throws it up on the shore; even so, monks, whatsoever person is immoral, of a wicked nature, impure, of suspicious behavior, of covert deeds, one who is no recluse though claiming to be such, one rotten within, full of lusts, a rubbish-heap of filth,—with such the Order consorts not, but gathering together quickly throws him out. Though, monks, he be seated in the midst of the Order, yet is he far away from the Order; far away is the Order from him. Since this is so . . . this is the third strange and wonderful thing. . . .

Just as, monks, whatsoever great rivers there are—namely, Ganga,



Yamuna, Aciravati, Sarabhu, Mahi—these, on reaching the mighty ocean, abandon their former names and lineage, and henceforth go by the name of just “mighty ocean,” even so, monks, the four castes—namely the nobles, the Brahmanas, the merchants, and the serfs—on going forth from home to the homeless in the dhamma-discipline proclaimed by the Wayfarer, abandon their former names and lineage and go by the name of just “recluses who are Sakya sons.” Since this is so, this is the fourth strange and wonderful thing. . . .

Just as, monks, whatsoever streams flow into the mighty ocean and whatsoever floods fall from the sky, there is no shrinkage nor overflow seen thereby in the mighty ocean,—even so, monks, though many monks pass finally away in that condition of Nirvana which has no remainder, yet is there no shrinkage nor overflow in that condition of Nirvana seen thereby. Since this is so . . . this is the fifth strange and wonderful thing.

Just as, monks, the mighty ocean is of one flavor, the flavor of salt, even so, monks, this dhamma is of one flavor, the flavor of release. Since this is so . . . this is the sixth strange and wonderful thing. . . .<sup>a</sup>

This salvation is nirvana. One of the best known of these parables about nirvana is the example of the blacksmith who hammers hard on the red-hot iron until the sparks fly. They fly for a while and then disappear. Such is nirvana. The word is in common speech: if you blow out a candle that is not nirvana; but if a lamp, exhausting its fuel, burns lower and lower until no light is visible and darkness follows, then it is said that nirvana has come to the lamp.

We ourselves might liken the process to the driving of a car. There are those who drive vigorously on through life at top speed. They will probably hit a telephone pole or a curb and be wiped out before they arrive at their destination, and the fuel will be spilt uselessly on the ground. That is an undesirable way to stop. Then there is the fearful man who is so frightened something may happen to him that he constantly brakes the car, not using up his fuel supply and thus frustrating its use. And there is the third man, who drives easily through the landscape, and enjoys it so much that he forgets to refuel, runs out of gas, and so stops. To the Buddhist that is a desirable way in which to end existence, because one is content and has used up all one's fuel, that is, karma. Thus should nirvana come about.

The Buddha refused to answer questions about the nature of nirvana in part because a glimpse of salvation is not the way to attain

<sup>a</sup>F. L. Woodward, trans., *Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*, Part II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935).

salvation. But the ass is best goaded along his way by a carrot suspended before his nose, or the knowledge that there is fodder in the stable, so as time went on Gotamism, in being elaborated and adjusted to the desires of its followers, produced the Hinayana and Mahayana sects. Yana means vehicle. Maha means great, thus the Mahayana is the great vehicle or vessel in which ultimately all living creatures will be carried along to salvation. Hinayana is the small vehicle that will carry only a few, only those who go through strenuous discipline, asceticism, and yoga practices. Thus we have a religion for the masses, by revelation; and a religion for the chosen few; through discipline and effort. We will discuss Hinayana first.

Hinayana is often referred to as the Southern Buddhist school, for the missionaries of the Emperor Asoka spread it, around 250 B.C., throughout the empire. It rooted firmly in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam, where it remained permanently fixed as the prevailing religion. Mahayana is called the northern school, because it spread to the north, to Tibet, Mongolia, China, and Japan, in which countries it prevailed.

Hinayana is also called Pali Buddhism, Pali being the language in which the sermons of the Buddha and commentaries upon them were set down, the language that the Buddha himself spoke, converted into a scriptural written language. Mahayana Buddhism is sometimes called Sanskrit Buddhism, since Sanskrit was used to record the sermons of the Buddha in the northern branch of Buddhism. Actually Hinayana is a negative term of derogation invented by the Mahayana Buddhists to belittle their rivals. The Hinayana Buddhists refer to their system as Theravada: *i.e.*, the way of the Theras, or elder monks.

Hinayana Buddhism has taken on a stern character and become the religion of an elite, for few separate themselves to follow a monkish existence and so renounce all earthly life, in the manner of the sannyasis. Buddhism has this monkish character most markedly in Ceylon; but in Siam and to a certain extent in Burma, no vow is taken by the monk, since the Buddha himself is quoted to have said that vows are dangerous magical devices. They are dangerous because they are not an act of reasonable conduct, but bind the will when the will should not be bound. The Buddha preferred the breaking of vows to a strict adherence to them, for they belong to compulsive magic rather than to the realm of enlightened choice.

They are taken not to renounce something, but to gain something, and the arhat, or holy man who has renounced everything, is the only one who can hope, in the Hinayana view, to vanish into nirvana at the end of his life.

The Hinayana school is also called the yellow-gowned order, from the robes of the monks. As for the nature of this religion, it can better be felt than stated, for it will answer specific questions only in the form of parables. The Hinayana are extremely learned; they spend much time in meditation before statues of the Buddha that are very apt to be wreathed in neon lights, particularly in Siam, where modern devices are popular and are not considered unworthy of a great spiritual tradition. If you try to meditate with them, you may ask whether the discipline of so sitting is not worth more than any theoretical answer to any theoretical question you might ask. For the impact of Buddhist doctrine shows strongly in the life of the people. They have learned from it something of the attitude of being a witness to one's self that produces detachment, kindness, appreciation, and serenity in the face of life's more distressing events.

In Siam, Buddhism is prevailingly a monk's religion, but the monks take no vow. Most of them remain in the monastery for only three months; and every male Siamese spends some time in such a monastery, receiving a new name and being dismissed by his family exactly as if he had taken a vow. For a little while he lives a strict life as a monk; and then he returns to his everyday activities, somewhat enlightened by this period of discipline.

I once asked one of the abbots in Bangkok whether he intended, or foresaw, as many people said he did, that he would remain in the monkhood permanently and rise to higher office. He said he could not tell, for he might feel like leaving tomorrow. Probably he will not do so. He will probably become something on the order of a high abbot in Siam. But he was careful to stress that he was free to leave at any time, and that he had no plans for the future and no security.

Hinayana or Pali Buddhism has developed one definite philosophical doctrine that is known as the anatta doctrine. Anatta is the Pali form of what in Sanskrit would be called a-atman, that is, the not-atman, or not-self. It means that the atman cannot be described in words, rather than that it is unreal. Hinayana has always stressed

that the atman, in being indescribable, ought never to be mentioned, and that therefore it is better to deny its existence than to corrupt that existence by an attempt to describe it. The doctrine is more a reflection upon the limited meaning of the verb "to be" than upon the atman itself.

This doctrine of anatta has been developed in Pali literature at some length, particularly in a book called the *Milindapanha*, or questions of King Milinda. It was probably written during the first century B.C., at the same time as the Buddha biographies.

The story of Milinda, which contains the Anatta doctrine, is the tale of a king of that name known in Greek history as Menandros, a Hellenistic ruler of India. He is thus a foreign conqueror. As the story opens he is sitting on his rooftop considering the low state of Indian learning. There is no inspired teacher anywhere who could be expected to answer the questions of the king. We are then referred to the preincarnations of King Milinda, and learn that the king was formerly a young monk in a Buddhist community who would not do his sweeping diligently, having a horror of dirt. An older monk pushed him and told him to do a good job, but the younger monk did not heed the warning and continued to be slovenly. Finally the old monk pushed him to the ground with his broom. Disgusted with having touched the dirt, the young monk scrambled up and took a bath of purification in the Ganges. If, when you take such a bath, though only on certain days, you dip under the surface, you are granted a wish that will come true. The young monk dived into the water and wished that in future incarnations he would be able to ask such witty and intricate questions that no one could answer them. The old monk knew what had happened, so he, too, took a bath in the Ganges and made a wish. He wished that he might be able to answer all the questions put by the young monk in future incarnations, planning in this way to rebuke the young monk's ego.

By future incarnations, the old monk was reborn in the heavens of the gods, the young monk as King Milinda, sitting on his roof in the moonlight, at about 100 B.C., regretting the absence of a philosopher great enough to answer his questions. He had searched widely for one, but had not found one.

The gods in heaven had watched the young king and were worried. They sent Indra, the king of the gods, to ask one of themselves

to incarnate himself on earth in the family of a Brahmin, so that he might answer King Milinda's questions, since it was damaging to the Buddha that the king's questions should go unanswered. The being so approached, the reincarnated old monk, realized the necessity for action and so incarnates himself on earth in the house of a Brahmin.

At this point in the story a third monk enters the scene. He is sitting in a state of perfect bliss and does not wish to be disturbed. He has been asked to instruct the son of the Brahmin, the reincarnated deva-monk, but has refused. Indra comes and reproaches him for not caring about the world and for refusing. To expiate the sin of unconcern the third monk is ordered to go every morning for ten years to beg at the house of the Brahmin, where he will be given nothing. He begins his seven-year expiation. After seven years of such begging, the Brahmin meets him on the road and laughs at him, saying, "Oh you monk with your shaven and oiled head, did you get anything when you went to my house?" The third monk says that for the first time he has just received something. The old Brahmin is furious. He goes home and demands if the monk was given anything, and is told that he was not. So the Brahmin meets the monk the next day and says, "Now I know what you Buddhist monks are. You are evil liars, for you were given nothing."

The third monk says, "Oh Brahmin, I am not a liar. For seven years I have gone to your house, and have never received so much as a greeting, but yesterday when I went a maid came out and said, 'May the honorable sir go further on in his beggar's walk.' I consider that a gift."

The old Brahmin went home thinking: "These monks even talk well of us in exchange for so much as a word. What kind of karma would we receive if we did give them a spoonful of rice every day?" So the next morning he invites the third monk inside and feeds him, and then keeps him in his house until the reincarnated monk has grown to the age of ten.

At ten the boy, or reincarnated monk, who long ago pushed King Milinda's previous incarnation down in the dirt, demands to be taught wisdom. His father, the old Brahmin, tells him wisdom consists of the three *Vedas*; the *Rig-Veda*, *Sama-Veda*, and *Yajur Veda*. When the boy has learned these, he will be sent to a great master. In three weeks the boy returns and says he knows the *Vedas* by heart,

and what else can he learn? The father says that there is nothing more, but sends him off to one of the philosophers questioned by King Milinda, saying that perhaps he may know something further. In three days the boy returns, saying that he has learned all the philosopher has to teach, and is there nothing more?

The father knows of nothing more, and the son is discontented. At last he asks the third monk if there is not something else to learn. The old monk tells him that he can learn the doctrine of the Buddha. The father lets the boy study with the old monk, thinking he will return, as usual, in three days. But the son does not return for well over a year, and the old monk teaches him the whole content of the Pali Canon, starting with the late commentaries and then slowly proceeding to the early Buddhist sermons. The boy thinks it is foolish to proceed from the canon to the sermons, from the gloss to the original. The third monk reads the boy's thought and tells him that he has committed a great sin, for the teacher, or guru, must never be thought of as mortal, he is a divinity and hence above criticism. Therefore, in order to avoid a bad karma incurred by thinking the old monk a fool, the boy must perform an expiatory act. The boy agrees, and is sent to a town where he will receive a visit from King Milinda, whose questions he will now be wise enough to answer. Thus the wheel comes full cycle, and we return to the original scene in which the king sits in the moonlight, declaring that there is not a single person in all India capable of answering his questions.

He is told of the new arrival, and in full court panoply sets out to visit him. He finds a huge assemblage of some 5,000 monks sitting in long lines together, who want to introduce him to Nagasena, the great monk, who is the boy reborn at the request of the devas, and instructed at the request of Indra.

King Milinda says he does not need to be introduced, but is clever enough to find the teacher for himself. He surveys the assembly, sees the teacher, and his hair stands on end, for he recognizes his power. Yet boldly he goes up to this man and says, "You are the venerable Nagasena of whom we have heard so much."

Nagasena says, "That is what people say, but if you look closely"—and here he refers to anatta doctrine—"there isn't really any substance that could be called Nagasena."

The king retorts that he is a liar, because the very name Nagasena



does not make sense. He then begins to ask questions; the purpose behind the whole story from the beginning. He asks if the hair on the man's head is Nagasena, or the nails on his fingers, or his skin, bones, or yellow gown. To each question Nagasena answers "no."

The king then says he is a supreme liar, for if nothing about him is Nagasena, then he is not Nagasena, and the king has proven that Nagasena does not even exist.

Nagasena counters by asking if the king has come on foot.

The king says that he never walks any distance, but that he arrived in a carriage.

"Ah," says Nagasena, "what is a carriage? Do you mean the wheels, the axle, or the whip of the driver, or the seat?" The king says that a carriage is none of these things.

Nagasena then says the king is a liar, for he says he came in a carriage, yet whatever Nagasena asks of is not a carriage, therefore there is no such thing as a carriage.

The king replies "Oh yes, Nagasena, but one does refer to the accumulation of these in themselves meaningless particles by the name of carriage."

"So then," says Nagasena, "does one refer to the accumulation of hair, nails, bone, and skin conventionally by the name Nagasena?"

This dispute over with, the king puts to Nagasena what are called two-edged problems; hundreds of them, night after night, and Nagasena answers them all. The king asks about the intricate points of Hinayana Buddhist doctrine and in particular about the anatta doctrine. The most important of these questions is about karma. Who carries karma? When karma works itself out through various incarnations, who is the one who owns karma, and is driven by it. Is it not the atman?

The answer is always that karma is without a master, but works of itself. It is the only reality that exists. It is a machine without an operator, and is self-driven.

One of these two-edged problems is a question asked by Nagasena.

"When you sit at Court, oh King, and somebody comes and says: My neighbor has stolen my mango fruit; and you find out that the mango tree was planted by his father out of a seed, do you then say the man has owned only that one mango seed?"

"Oh no," says the king. "I would say that by law of origination the tree and all its fruits that have grown out of the father's planted seed are considered the property of this man, so that the man who stole the fruits is a thief, and I would have his hand cut off, in accordance with the law."

Here we see the Buddha's doctrine of dependent origination at work. Similarly, can one consider the flame of the candle you have lit from another candle burned down during the night as the same flame as that of the candle from which you have taken it? It is not the same flame, but it has its origin in the earlier flame. This law of causation works on its own grounds and is the law of karma. So the question of who incarnates, who reaps the fruit of karma, is left unanswered because it does not require an answer. One should concentrate upon the working or process of karma, and on its coming to an end, rather than on its cause, which we may never know.

So Hinayana is strict and ascetic, and holds out no promises of future bliss to be attained by simple means. As such its appeal could never be to the more or less inert laity. Mahayana fulfilled that role. It centered on the great university of Nalanda, which was not destroyed until the 12th century A.D. Today the Indian government plans to reopen the university, reconstruct its buildings, and establish there a center of Buddhist studies. The best and most learned of Buddhist monks once taught there, and their following was a large one. One of the first names we hear in the history of Indian Mahayana is that of Asvaghosha, who not only compiled the poetic life story of the Buddha, but also many philosophical treatises on Mahayana. He flourished during the first century A.D. In his *Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* he speaks of the one and only important essence of all being, which he calls the tathata, or thatness, or suchness. It is a concept to be found in the *Rig-Veda*, and one that we identify with the Being of Being. It is indescribable but can be drawn to the attention of others, even though one cannot know it objectively. Out of the pronoun tat, Asvaghosha makes a noun, thatness or suchness.

Asvaghosha believes that the part of the Suchness that is a'so present in the true self of the atman is constantly involved in samsara; but also that our imagining ourselves to be individual entities with special names and functions is an error built upon ignorance.

The appearance world is nothing but maya. Ignorance is the lack of a certain inner knowledge, but it is in itself an almost demonic power, a beastly objective reality that spoils our higher existence. Thus the main element of evil in Asvaghosha's philosophical system is memory, for without memory there would be no illusion (or maya). There would not be the error of thinking that each of us is really a particular man living in a particular time at a particular spot. Such a fragmentation of the self would not take place, if memory did not produce it, for all matter is seen to be the production of memory. This view is reminiscent of that of Henri Bergson, who also ascribes the material world to the power of memory, insofar as it exists as we describe it. If we did not combine the memory of what is past and what has just been done, we would not conceive of a material universe, for the universe of our sense experience consists, at any given moment, only of a multitude of separate color-spots, as portrayed by the Impressionist painters. Therefore memory should be overcome by some Yoga effort; for if we could live without memory, but in the moment, then the unconditioned quality of all existence would be constantly obvious to us. The Being of Being would not evade us, if we ceased to judge the eternal moment in terms of what we remember of the past. In the religious sense all things are eternal; not long-living, but beyond time, in some other order of being than time. In this view things are seen to be eternally in nirvana. If we were aware of their Suchness, their Being of Being, memory would not spoil them by confusing them with secondary a priori references. Religiously speaking, one might interpret this idea to mean that you can have a real experience only in the present, never in the past or future. God is a god of the living, and not of the dead.

Such a viewpoint is close to the Hindu concept of maya; and Asvaghosha has been compared to Sankara and his Vedanta doctrine. Conversely, when Sankara spoke about maya and the non-being of this world, he was reproached for being a crypto-Buddhist. The two philosophies use a different vocabulary, but they are closely allied in spirit. As one of the major American commentators on Buddhism, Ananda Coomaraswamy, the former curator of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, said in his book *Hinduism and Buddhism*, the more one knows about Hinduism and Buddhism, the less one is able to point out the differences. Elsewhere he has said:

Let us on the contrary recognize that there exists no breach of continuity between the old and the new laws, and that the Mahayana and the later expansion of Hinduism are the very fruit of the earlier discipline.

And that:

The development of that religion (*Mahayana*) from the basis of early Buddhist psychology is nearly parallel to the development of medieval Hinduism on the basis of the pure idealism of the Upanishads.<sup>9</sup>

A century or so after Asvaghosha another great teacher rose to eminence at the University of Nalanda. His name was Nagarjuna. Asvaghosha, a Brahmin, began life as a Hindu, and became a Buddhist later. Nagarjuna, who was probably born in the latter half of the second century A.D., was a South Indian of a Brahmin family. Part of his history is fabulous: he is said to have been a wizard with the power to render himself invisible; and the Tibetans go further, and claim that he lived to be 600 years of age. This sort of speculation we may dismiss. His books remain. His major surviving document, the *Madhyamikakarikas*, or Middle Doctrine, begins with the statement, "Nothing whatsoever exists anywhere at any time." He was what we would call a nihilist.

This statement deals less with the apparent world, than with the problems involved in the concept "to be." The verb to be should be reserved for the Tat, or Being of Being itself; for in applying being to lesser states of consciousness, we need a new concept to deal with the Being of Being. Or if we say that being is the property of the Being of Being, then other and lesser states cannot be said to be in the same words, for they have a lower type of existence than has the ultimate Brahman, Tat, or Being of Being that exhibits the true functions of to be. So the statement that nothing whatsoever exists anywhere at any time was twisted around by the students of Nagarjuna to mean that nothing, *i.e.*, The Nothing, does exist. This concept reminds us closely of the contemporary existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger and his attitude towards the "No-thing." The Nothing, or Shunyata, the emptiness, void, or complete vacuum, is one of the major philosophical terms of Mahayana philosophy. It is that which is indescribable, ungraspable, and beyond any possible concept. The Being of Being has existence, but nothing else, in com-

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<sup>9</sup> Arianda Commaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1915), pp. 175-226.

parison to the quality of existence possessed by the Being of Being, can be said to have any.

For Nagarjuna, nirvana is the realization that all the appearances of phenomenal reality have no essential being, and cannot be compared to the great void of what truly is. Avidya, that is maya, is the main reason for the illusion of an existence that we live with and by in phenomenal reality. He defines phenomenal existence as a continuous imaginary procession of unreal connectives.

Nagarjuna proceeds to state that nirvana cannot be said to exist, either, because nothing can be said about it. Even the Buddha and his doctrine do not exist in this sense: they are only a semblance of existence on a lower plane of ignorance. It is all right to teach the doctrine—Nagarjuna, after all, was a teacher by profession—but only for so long as you perceive that you are talking on the level of illusion and thus do not believe that you are thereby coming into contact with the Suchness.

What Nagarjuna actually establishes is the doctrine of a double truth. What you discuss on a lower level of understanding, or maya, which is misunderstanding, and is true there, ceases to have truth or relevance once you have been awakened to the higher state of consciousness where quite different conditions prevail. It is therefore permissible to teach that samsara should be overcome and nirvana obtained, but such teaching is an interim activity, an erroneous act that will cease to have any significance once you realize what nirvana truly is. Nirvana cannot be approached or sought. It exists in the absolute. Once attained, all else vanishes. Nagarjuna finishes his major work with the bold statement, "There is no difference at all between samsara and nirvana."

This idea is little less than revolutionary. Six hundred years previously the Buddha had said we must do everything to avoid further entanglement in samsara and to attain nirvana. The two were then opposed states. Nirvana he did not define, but said only, "Work out your salvation with diligence." Six hundred years later Nagarjuna tells us that nirvana and samsara are the same.

Around 400 A.D. there were two brothers at the University of Nalanda; Asanga and Vasubandhu, who were celebrated gurus. Asanga differs somewhat from the strict doctrine of his predecessor. He agrees that nothing exists, but adds that things seem to exist in the mind, so that the unreal reality of the phenomenal world at least has

one place where it *can* be dealt with. That one place is in the mind, where things have, as we would say, a type of psychological reality that, whether conforming to objectivity or not, must be dealt with. The mind, through Yoga, can develop truth. So Asanga reintroduced Yoga practices into the later school of Mahayana Buddhism, where otherwise all strict discipline would have been abandoned, since if nirvana and samsara were identical, there would be no point in trying to struggle out of the one towards the other.

Vasubandhu, Asanga's brother, survives only in Chinese translations made during the 7th century A.D. At the Sorbonne in Paris an effort is being made to re-translate them into Sanskrit, so that the original terms may be studied. It is claimed that at the commencement of his career, Vasubandhu was a Hinayana philosopher who claimed, in contradistinction to Nagarjuna, that everything exists. However, if one thinks of the matter, such seemingly opposed doctrines turn out, when analyzed, to be only the two faces of the same coin. Each revolves, after all, around an extremely abstract concept of the verb to be. In such realms total concepts are often interchangeable.

During the second part of his life Vasubandhu became converted, partly through the influence of his brother, to Mahayana Buddhism. He agreed that nothing existed, and was so disgusted with his previous, and Hinayana, writings, that he decided to atone for having misled mankind by means of them. He decided to cut off his tongue, so that he might never speak misleadingly again, but Asanga told him it would be better to employ his powers to disprove what he had previously stated. Vasubandhu did set himself to this task. He was once disgusted that his students never did any genuine research for themselves, so he told them they were like the jackal in the story of the tiger and the jackal. He was the tiger. The tiger went every day to hunt, and whenever he caught an antelope, yak, or some other animal, had to drag it into the high grass, for a tiger will not eat its prey while exposed. Each time the tiger had finished eating, choosing only the choicer parts, he left the corpse behind. Then the waiting jackal came and ate the remainder. One day the tiger, disgusted that he should do all the work and the jackal get the benefit, stopped the jackal and said to him, "Today we will change the procedure. You will drag the beast into the grass, so we may have a meal." The jackal was afraid of the tiger, who had never turned



against him before and who could have eaten him, so he said, "Very well, your majesty, we shall do so, but you must be reasonable and consider that the work of carrying so large a body from one place to another involves two different activities, one the carrying, the other, sobbing at the heaviness of the task. Now you, your majesty, will have the choice of which part of the task you prefer. The tiger angrily replied that he would not stoop to cry over such a task, and that the jackal could do that. Thus the matter has been ever since. Such was Vasubandhu's comment on the ways of pupils, followers, and students. The culmination of his work was a summary of the Buddhist Paradise doctrines of Mahayana.

The last of the great teachers at Nalanda university, Santideva, from *santi*, meaning peace and *deva*, divine, flourished around 700 A.D. He composed a handbook of Mahayana philosophy consisting of brief verses suitable for memorization. Mahayana Buddhism had by this time vastly changed from its original state. At this time every monk initiated into the Buddhist order took the so-called Bodhisattva vow. The term is important: the Bodhisattva was one who had his true being, *sattva*, in *bodhi*, enlightenment. The word has also been translated by Mrs. Rhys-Davids as "candidate of Buddha dignity." It is applied to those who, having purified themselves of all ignorance and misconception, will become enlightened and will ultimately be Buddhas themselves.

The Buddha himself made a distinction between those monks who took refuge in his order, who would have to be reincarnated three times as a monk in a human body before gaining enough stability to attain nirvana through Yoga practice; and those who would have to return only twice, or even only once, or who might gain enlightenment in their current lifetime. Again, he might say that someone "had entered into the stream," and was on the way to nirvana, but how long it might take to get there, or how many incarnations, it was impossible to say, though there was the guarantee that such a one would gain nirvana in time.

By 700 A.D. salvation has become both easier and more certain. Thus Santideva can state, in line with the general popular understanding of the term Bodhisattva, that all beings, down to the last blade of grass, animals, men, gods and demons, stars and planets, are basically and therefore ultimately Bodhisattvas, who, even if it takes them infinite ages and incarnations, will at last enter Buddha-

hood. This belief in universal possible salvation changes the outlook of later Mahayana profoundly.

For if everyone and everything is capable of salvation, then everyone and everything partakes of the nature of the Divine, so that all things, as well as people, are to be approached in a worshipful mood. Everything, even a newborn child, is to be venerated. The new monk no longer vows to do his best to find enlightenment and to obtain nirvana and so vanish from the world. On the contrary, in this new view of salvation, he almost renounces nirvana, for he does not want to enter highest bliss until he is sure that all those capable of salvation have heard the Buddhist doctrine and so have been aided on their way to enlightenment. Charity now takes the place of the personal greed for liberation that prevailed at the commencement of the Buddhist era. The monk now gives himself as ransom to free all other creatures lower in development, and thus less likely to achieve enlightenment, than he. The Bodhisattvas therefore rush into the lowest realms of hell, because the creatures most in need of the teachings of the Buddha are there.

Santideva's chief commandment is, love all beings, without exception, even those—and he specifically mentions them—who have destroyed Buddhist relics and images. His main work has often been compared to Thomas à Kempis' famous *Imitation of Christ*, a moral tract of widespread influence in medieval and modern Christian times. Yet from Santideva's injunction, we can learn that during the 8th century there were those who did destroy Buddhist images and temples: Huns and Bactrian invaders who harassed both Hindu and Buddhist. Santideva seems more interested in our charity towards those who destroy, than our charity towards our friends, to whom, presumably, we feel charitable anyhow, just as today many philanthropists are more interested in the comfort of criminals in prison than they are in those who are neither criminals nor in prison, on the theory that the latter are better off anyway.

Santideva's whole metaphysical system is based upon the assumption that the identification of our true self with the particular body we call our own is merely a convention that leads us to a false conclusion, insofar as there is no sense-evidence that can absolutely convince us that the body we usually call ours is in fact our true body, all the data being subjective. Why should you, asks Santideva, identify yourself with your temporal body, which the Buddha rightly

refers to as "that skin bag full of dirt"? You could project this dubious self-identity just as well into a marionette or a statue of a deity, as into this disgusting body of flesh and blood. Then he proclaims the law that it is necessary to identify oneself with all one's other selves, and with all other selves. It is nonsense, he says, to protect your body against injury, and not the bodies of all other beings with whom you can as easily identify yourself. The hand, when the foot is menaced, protects the foot, because it identifies itself with the foot and is as interested in its welfare as it is in its own. Thus we should be interested in the welfare of others, exactly as much as we are in our own. Since we are all rowing towards salvation in the same boat, it is to the betterment of each of us that we should see that the others row as expertly as we do.

This law leads Santideva to a further statement; we must transfer our consciousness into the bodies of others, a yoga practice prevalent at Santideva's time. In the Tantras, one of the later systems of Indian philosophy, we read of many yoga exercises wherein the Yogi sitting in asana fastened a mirror in front of him, hanging it against a tree. Next to it he placed a statue, say of the god Krishna. Then he looked in the mirror and tried to identify himself with the image of his own physical body, which he endeavors to see as a projection of the Self. He knew he was not so projected, but for the sake of the exercise he identified his Self with the mirror image. After this, closing his eyes and then opening them, he looked again into the mirror, which had been moved slightly, and saw Krishna reflected there, so he identified himself with Krishna. After several hours of alternating the images, he no longer knew whether he was himself or Krishna, and so had gained the ability to transfer his consciousness from his own body into the body of someone else, preferably, as in this case, into the body of a deity.

In consequence of Santideva's doctrine, all initiates into the Buddhist community from then on had to take a special vow, that of the Bodhisattva, that they would not obtain nirvana themselves before they had made sure that all other beings would be able to do so.

Popular Buddhism, that is, Mahayana Buddhism, reflects the teachings of these principal Nalanda philosophers. There are a number of Sutras, or ancient religious texts, that give us testimony to

these popular feelings. The ideas about Paradise became extremely detailed and concrete.

We saw in the Buddha biography composed by Asvaghosha and others about 500 years after the actual life of the Buddha, the return of all the ancient gods and demons that the Buddha himself relegated to obscurity, as being of no importance. In this return we can observe one of the surest laws of religious history; the beliefs that the founding prophet intended to circumvent or abolish reappear and are embodied into the canon some 500 years later. It is the tragedy of all religions that the very superstition and magic they were designed to put aside return in later times, in popular belief; for though a prophet may be able to change the intellectual outlook of the leaders who follow him, he has seldom been able to penetrate into the subconscious of the masses and work any change there. So it is not to be wondered at that 500 years after his death the Buddha, who ridiculed the devas, should become one himself and be worshipped as such, with all the panoply of religious ritual of which he disapproved.

So it is with the idea of paradise, the heavenly world depicted by early Hinduism that, though not denied by the Buddha, was by him relegated to the status of a comfortable folk tale. To the Buddha the way of liberation from samsara was not to enter Paradise, which was part of samsara, but nirvana, which was not. Half a millennium later nirvana has become identified with Paradise, so that to strive for it means to look for a place where beauty prevails and everyone is eternally happy.

Thus Hinayana was heretical in claiming that nirvana could be identified as complete annihilation, whereas the Buddha was most specific in leaving it undefined; and Mahayana was heretical to the same degree, but differently, in saying that nirvana was a positive state of mind, blissful happiness located in some wonderful paradise to be elaborately described in terms of a glorious landscaped garden.

As Buddhism expanded and became a religion of the masses, it was inevitable that both magic and the superstitious ideologies that are rooted deeply in the subconscious of primitive man should begin to color the doctrine. Such is the course of any religion; and it becomes particularly evident in various Buddhist texts that date from the first century A.D., which describe doctrine not in abstruse phil-

osophical terms, but in such terms as we can see would make nirvana intelligible to the village and urban illiterate masses. The Mahayana heaven is called Sukhavati, the sweet paradise of loveliness in the West, to which all souls go to become newly incarnate, once they have dedicated themselves by means of a worshipful attitude towards the Buddha.

There is a scripture called the *Sukhavati-Vyuha* that describes Paradise as it is so conceived. It is a fairly late text, as is instantly recognizable from its opening, for instead of being a simple exposition of the subject, or an exhortation to read, such as we find in any sermon reported of the Buddha, it presents us with a fabulous picture of the Bhagavad, or the Buddha, surrounded on Mount Rajagraha by 32,000 monks, all holy arhats, or enlightened ones, freed from the shackles of lower existence. They are monastic legendary heroes, in other words, possessed of enormous and frequently magical powers.

Thus it was heard by me. At one time the Bhagavad dwelt in Ragagriha, on the mountain Gridhrakuta, with a large assembly of Bhikshus, with thirty-two thousands of Bhikshus, all holy (arhats), free from frailties and cares, who had performed their religious duties, whose thoughts had been thoroughly freed through perfect knowledge, with inquiring thoughts, who had broken the fetters of existence, who had obtained their desires, who had conquered, who had achieved the highest self-constraint, whose thoughts and whose knowledge were unfettered, Mahanagas (great heroes), possessed of the six kinds of knowledge, self-controlled, meditating on the eight kinds of salvation, possessed of the powers, wise in wisdom, elders, great disciples, viz. *(there follows a list of 34 disciples ending with the blessed Ananda)*,—with these and with other elders, and great disciples, who were wise in wisdom, with the exception of one person who had still to be advanced on the path of the disciples, viz. the blessed Ananda;—and with many noble-minded Bodhisattvas, led by Maitreya.

Then the blessed Ananda, having risen from his seat, having put his cloak on one shoulder, and knelt on the earth with his right knee, making obeisance with folded hands in the direction of the Bhagavat, spoke thus to the Bhagavat: "Thy organs of sense, O Bhagavat, are serene, the colour of thy skin is clear, the colour of thy face is bright and yellowish. As an autumn cloud is pale, clear, bright and yellowish, thus the organs of sense of the Bhagavat are serene, the colour of his face is clear, the colour of his skin is bright and yellowish. And as, O Bhagavat, a piece of gold coming from the Gambu river, having been thrown into a furnace by a clever smith or by his apprentice, and well fashioned, when thrown on a pale cloth, looks extremely clear, bright and yellowish, thus the



organs of sense of the Bhagavat are serene, the colour of his face is clear, and the colour of his skin bright and yellowish. Moreover, I do not know, O Bhagavat, that I have ever seen the organs of sense of the Tathagata so serene, the colour of his face so clear, and the colour of his skin so bright and yellowish before now. This thought occurs to me, O Bhagavat: probably, the Tathagata dwells to-day in the state of a Buddha, probably the Tathagata dwells to-day in the state of a Gina, in the state of omniscience, in the state of a Mahahaga; and he contemplates the holy and fully enlightened Tathagatas of the past, future, and present." <sup>10</sup>

This conception is a far cry from Buddha sitting in simplicity, surrounded by a few seekers after enlightenment. It is, instead, a heavenly host, and we are presented with a long list of the names of the arhats, a glorification comparable to the endless genealogies of the Christian gospels and the Old Testament.

The Bhagavad then speaks to Ananda, saying that long ago, in a wholly and fully incomprehensible era long before now, there arose a completely enlightened Buddha—the historical Buddha told no such stories. We see here a late flowering of mass mentality, the primitive side of man that rises to the surface in the later developments of Buddhism.

Ananda is told of the concentration of a certain Bodhisattva, who meritoriously vows that he does not want to obtain nirvana unless he has complied with a whole book of vows of conditions, essential to the salvation, but smacking more of compulsive magic than of inner enlightenment. Basically, the Bodhisattva cannot obtain his own salvation unless and until he has obtained the salvation of at least ten million billions of other beings. There is then described the idea of Sukhavati, or the heavenly paradise that is the goal of those who obtain nirvana. The historical Buddha refused to describe nirvana in any way, but nonetheless it was clear that nirvana had no correspondence with the corporeal world as we know it. Paradise, or nirvana, in the Mahayana text sounds like the catalogue of some celestial Fabergé, a court jeweler with an unlimited expense account and great mechanical ingenuity.

And, O Ananda, the world called Sukhavati belonging to that Bhagavat Amitabha is prosperous, rich, good to live in, fertile, lovely, and filled with many gods and men. Then, O Ananda, in that world there are neither hells, nor the brute creation, nor the realm of departed spirits, nor bodies of Asuras, nor untimely births (*an untimely birth is one*

<sup>10</sup> Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLIX, pp. 1-3.



that comes at a time, or out of time, when there are no Buddhas to listen to). And there do not appear in this world such gems as are known in the world Sukhavati.

Now, O Ananda, that world Sukhavati is fragrant with several sweet-smelling scents, rich in manifold flowers and fruits, adorned with gem trees, and frequented by tribes of manifold sweet-voiced birds, which have been made by the Tathagata (*on purpose*). And, O Ananda, those gem trees are of several colours, of many colours, and of many hundred thousand colours. There are gem trees there of golden-colour, and made of gold. There are those of silver-colour, and made of silver. There are those of beryl-colour, and made of beryl. There are those of crystal-colour, and made of crystal. There are those of coral-colour, and made of coral. There are those of red pearl-colour, and made of red pearls. There are those of diamond-colour, and made of diamonds.

There are some trees of two gems, viz. gold and silver. There are some of three gems, viz. gold, silver, and beryl. There are some of four gems, viz. gold, silver, beryl, and crystal. There are some of five gems, viz. gold, silver, beryl, crystal, and coral. There are some of six gems, viz. gold, silver, beryl, crystal, coral and red pearls. There are some of seven gems, viz. gold, silver, beryl, crystal, coral, red pearls, and diamonds as the seventh.<sup>11</sup>

This catalogue goes on for some time. There are trees like those Chinese trees made of precious stones, with leaves, buds, and flowers of everything from gold to red pearls. They are fragrant. The flowers are enormous. The country, to provide effortless travel, is without mountains, flat, and agreeably landscaped. The rivers are adorned with flowers and gems, and are musical. There are birds innumerable. The food is superb:

"... in that world of Sukhavati, beings do not take food consisting of gross materials of gravy or molasses; but whatever food they desire, such food they perceive, as if it were taken, and become delighted in body and mind. Yet they need not put it into their mouth.<sup>12</sup>

Meals are followed by perfumes, and by music and rich clothing. Jewels, as one might expect in a jewelry-loving people, are plentiful, ornate, and rich, and there are palaces for all. The ground is covered with fragrant petals. Social life consists chiefly in a series of charming ceremonial acts of devotion. The whole tenor of the text, however, leaves one with the impression that this paradise is a subjective one. It is, somehow, a real dream.

After having described paradise, the Buddha-candidate says that

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit., pp. 33-34.

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., pp. 40-41.

he will not gain insight and obtain liberation until he is sure that all other beings will enter the wonderful Heaven that his efforts to save them will create for them.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine there should be either hell, brute-creation, the realm of departed spirits, or the body of Asuras, then may I not obtain the highest perfection.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should fall away (*die*), and fall into hell, the brute-creation, the realm of departed spirits, or into the body of Asuras, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should not all be of one colour, viz. a golden colour, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine there should be perceived any difference between gods and men, except when people count and tell, saying, "These are gods and men, but only in ordinary and imperfect parlance," then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should not be possessed of the highest Paramitas of miraculous power and self-control, so that they could at least in the shortest moment of thought step over a hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of Buddha countries, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should not all be possessed of the recollection of their former births, so as at least to remember a hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of kalpas (*higher astronomical numbers*), then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should not all acquire the divine eye, so as at least to be able to see a hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of worlds, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should not all acquire the divine ear, so as at least to be able to hear at the same time the good Law from a hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of Buddha countries, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should not all be skilled in the knowledge of the thoughts of other people, so as at least to be able to know the deeds and thoughts of beings belonging to a hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of Buddha countries, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should form any idea of property, even with regard to their own body, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge. (*An odd sociological observation.*)

O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine, the beings who are

born there should not all be firmly established, viz. in absolute truth, till they have reached Mahaparinirvana, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

There are thirty-five more paragraphs of such stipulations, ranging from the Bodhisattva's not being required to do their own sewing and washing, to moral precepts.

O Bhagavat, if for the beings in this country of mine, after I have obtained insight, even the name of evil should exist, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

And, insofar as it casts a reflection of the type of worship that was given to the Buddha at this time:

O Bhagavat, if immeasurable and innumerable blessed Buddhas in immeasurable Buddha countries do not glorify my name, . . . may I not obtain highest enlightenment.

O Bhagavat, if any being in that Buddha country of mine, after I have obtained Bodhi, should learn the limit of the beauty of its ornament—even if he be possessed of the divine eye and should know its various beauties—being able to say—that Buddha country possesses so and so much beauty and so and so much magnificence—then may I not obtain highest enlightenment.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, it should be and must be impossible to express in quantitative terms all the magnificence of this new state of nirvana in Sukhavati.

In many ways childish and naïve, the story goes on to tell us that the lotus flowers growing in this Buddhist country should have petals at least two miles in circumference, and should be so soft that when stepping on them the foot should sink down at least two feet every time a stride is taken. Of such is paradise, in Mahayana Buddhism. It is elaborately described, a factitious heaven full of sensual beauty. It is also, in contradistinction to the teachings of the historical Buddha, extremely easy to obtain. The Buddha said not only that it was difficult to attain nirvana, but that it was even difficult to obtain the human incarnation that made it possible for us to conceive of and strive towards nirvana at all.

In popular Mahayana not only is it easy to attain nirvana, it is virtually impossible not to obtain it, insofar as there are multitudes of Bodhisattvas sitting in paradise like fishermen with a hook and

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., pp. 14-15.

line, to catch up both your soul and the soul of all beings. These Bodhisattvas have dedicated all their tremendous power to this one task, and devote their existence to the liberation of those still trapped in samsara. Even if you struggle against salvation, your efforts will be futile, for the Bodhisattvas represent the almost inexorable working of grace against which man cannot struggle. It is sufficient to mention the name Buddha once to make certain that you will be received into the realm of Sukhavati. Indeed, even should you mention the word buddha incidentally, as a curse, in a blasphemous statement, or the holy syllable om; even if you mention the Buddha only to deny his existence, you will be saved, for whatever your rational mind may conclude, you are nevertheless snatched up into paradise at the first syllable. Mahayana texts go so far as to say that a child just learning to speak in nonsense syllables, if it say boo, the first syllable of the Buddha's name, will have secured paradise.

The end of many Mahayana scriptures contains what is called *sravanaphala*, or the praise of hearership, the power bestowed merely by having heard a sermon. The sermon itself may be extremely brief. The sermon, as is the manner of an Indian story, may only be an anecdote or an aphorism, surrounded by a long and interesting framework, telling you under what conditions the story was spoken, by whom, why, and what the result of it was. Thus the whole sermon, stripped of this material, may merely be: the Buddha once said to his monks: Strive for nirvana. That is all. But at the end will be sixty pages of praise for what this enormous sermon can do for the listener; if he repeats it only once, or only one word of it, or even one syllable, the merit he will thereby acquire will be immeasurably greater than any other conceivable merit.

In one of these sermons the Buddha, that is, the legendary Buddha, says to a disciple, "Do you think there are many grains of sand in this huge River Ganges?" And the monk replies, "Yes, indeed, Bhagavad, there are innumerable, immeasurable numbers of grains of sand in this River Ganges." The Buddha continues: "If there were as many universes as there are grains of sand in this River Ganges, would there be many universes in that case?" The monk replies that the number of universes would be unimaginable. Then the Buddha says, "If you would count the grains of sand in all the Rivers Ganges in all those universes that are as numerous as the grains of sand in this particular River Ganges, would there be many grains of

sand?" The monk is overwhelmed. He cannot even conceive of such numbers. And the Buddha says: "If somebody, however, would give as many worlds in dedication to the memory of the Buddha as there are grains of sand in the Rivers Ganges that are as numerous as the grains of sand in this River Ganges, would that be a great offering?" The monk is mute. He has nothing to say. The idea is too tremendous to be expressible. Thus the end of the sermon concludes that were we to repeat so much as a syllable of this sermon, then we would acquire infinitely greater merit than the merit acquired by the man who would give as many universes as there are grains of sand.

In other words, here, as in so many other religions and their texts, we have the attempt to express in incredibly large terms that which is beyond all possible quantitative terms: the quality of the otherness of the Being of Being, which cannot be expressed nor can it be found in terms of being alone. So one tries to give expression, to the best of one's ability, to the most powerful accumulation of quantitative expressions possible. Correspondingly, Christian theologians said that even the smallest sin outweighed the entire universe, for it was of ultimate, absolute meaning, not relative meaning.

This is the popular type of later Mahayana tradition, one that makes use of all the delights of sensual life, of all the poetry inherent in descriptions of beauty, and of all the power of quantitative numerical expression, to exposit the magnificence of the Buddha realm called Sukhavati, into which we will all be assumed, without doubt, since we are too weak to resist, even if we chose, the power of those dedicated souls, or Bodhisattvas, who have given whole universes in dedication to our personal salvation from *samsara*.

Mahayana possesses, besides its popular literature, another type that is abstract, intellectual, and learned, and that expresses itself by paradox. One of the better-known pieces of this literature is the Diamond Sutra.

Subhuti inquired of the Lord Buddha, saying, "Honoured of the worlds! In future ages, when this scripture is proclaimed, amongst those beings destined to hear, shall any conceive within their minds a sincere, unmingled faith?"

The Lord Buddha replied to Subhuti, saying: "Have no such apprehensive thought! Even at the remote period of five centuries subsequent to the Nirvana of the Lord Buddha, there will be many disciples observing the monastic vows, and assiduously devoted to good works. These,

hearing this scripture proclaimed, will believe in its immutability, and similarly conceive within their minds a pure, unmingled faith. Besides, it is important to realize that faith thus conceived is not exclusive in virtue of the insular thought of any particular Buddha, but because of its affiliation with the concrete thoughts of myriad Buddhas, throughout infinite ages. Therefore, amongst the beings destined to hear this scripture proclaimed, many, by momentary reflection, will intuitively conceive a pure and holy faith."

The Lord Buddha addressed Subhuti saying: "What think you? Has the Lord Buddha really attained to supreme spiritual wisdom? Or has he a system of doctrine which can be specifically formulated?"

Subhuti replied, saying: "As I understand the meaning of the Lord Buddha's discourse, he has no system of doctrine which can be specifically formulated; nor can the Lord Buddha express, in explicit terms, a form of knowledge which can be described as supreme spiritual wisdom. And why? Because what the Lord Buddha adumbrated in terms of the law is transcendental and inexpressible. Being a purely spiritual concept, it is neither consonant with law, nor synonymous with anything apart from the law. Thus is exemplified the manner by which wise disciples and holy Buddhas, regarding initiation as the law of their minds, severally attained to different planes of spiritual wisdom."

The Lord Buddha addressed Subhuti, saying, "What think you? If a benevolent person bestowed as alms an abundance of the seven treasures sufficient to fill the universe, would there accrue to that person a considerable merit?"

Subhuti replied, saying: "A very considerable merit, honoured of the worlds! And why? Because what is referred to does not partake of the nature of ordinary merit, and in this sense the Lord Buddha made mention of a 'considerable merit'." <sup>18</sup>

The answer to such a question in the 5th century B.C. would have been a simple affirmative. It is stated in the four truths and the eightfold path. But in later Mahayana the answer is more complicated. Now the Buddha is seen to have no system of doctrine, because what he expresses in terms of the law is inexpressible, a purely spiritual concept consonant neither with law nor anything apart from the law. So the Buddha rejoins, saying:

If a disciple adhered with implicit faith to a stanza of this scripture, and diligently explained it to others, the intrinsic merit of that disciple would be relatively greater. And why? Because, Subhuti, the holy Buddhas, and the law by which they attained to supreme spiritual wisdom, severally owe their inception to the truth of this sacred scripture. Subhuti,

<sup>18</sup> William Gemmell, trans., *The Diamond Sutra* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1912), pp. 18-25.



what is ordinarily termed the Buddhist law is not really a law attributive to Buddha. . . .

. . . Subhuti, what the Lord Buddha declared as "transcendent wisdom" by means of which we reach "the other shore" is not essentially "transcendent wisdom"—in its essence it transcends all wisdom.<sup>17</sup>

So in paradoxical terms, which are far from meaningless, the Buddha says that it is impossible to bring about any formulation of what the acquisition of nirvana or the meaning and existence of nirvana might be. This statement is entirely in the style of the great philosopher Nagarjuna, who claims that nothing exists at any time anywhere whatsoever. So the doctrine of the Buddha cannot be formulated and nirvana cannot be discussed. In this we see that there is an element of original Gotamism caught in these tremendous abstract philosophical formulations, the element that it is impossible to express in words what is beyond all word concepts, in other words, the ultimate Tat.

The *Diamond Sutra* further on contains the Buddha's statement that:

. . . in reality there are no living beings to whom the Lord Buddha can bring salvation. If there were living beings to whom the Lord Buddha could bring salvation, the Lord Buddha would necessarily assume the reality of such arbitrary concepts as an entity, a being, a living being, and a personality. Subhuti, what the Lord Buddha adverted to as an entity is not in reality an entity; it is only understood to be an entity, and believed in as such, by the common, uneducated people. Subhuti, what are ordinarily referred to as the "common, uneducated people," these the Lord Buddha declared to be not "common, uneducated people."<sup>18</sup>

Thus no expression about anything is any longer possible, and all formulations about the ultimate are impossible in any language.

This philosophical paradox more or less marks the end of Buddhism in India, for after the destruction of the University of Nalanda about 1200 by invading Mohammedans who burned down every Hindu and Buddhist shrine that they encountered, Buddhism disappeared permanently from India itself. For this disappearance there are many reasons. Hinduism strongly revived in the 8th and 9th centuries. The Dravidian inhabitants of South India were violently anti-Buddhist and anti-Jain, a cult that in turn was itself opposed to Buddhism. According to Chinese travelers, Buddhism had already

<sup>17</sup> Gemmell, op. cit., pp. 26-47.

<sup>18</sup> Gemmell, pp. 92-93.

begun to decay from within in the 5th century A.D., and by 700 the decay was noticeable, if nowhere else, in the ruins of abandoned monastic establishments. It was the Mohammedan conquest of North India (1193-1203) that finally toppled Buddhism in India. Today there are more Buddhists in the United States of America than there are in India, where the faith originated. By this statement we mean India proper, for Buddhism became well established in Tibet in the 13th century, and is still well established there and in the surrounding districts and kingdoms of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal. Buddhism reached China in the 5th century A.D., and from there spread through Mongolia, parts of southwest Asia, and Japan. It has remained firmly rooted, also, in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam, or Thailand, and among the Nisei or second-generation Chinese and Japanese of America.

As Buddhism migrated eastward and filtered through Tibet towards China and Japan, it underwent many changes, primarily because it had to abandon its native language. All things are transmuted, by translation, into something other than they first were. In China, Buddhism no longer was set forth in Pali and Sanskrit, but was expressed in Chinese, the language of a people whose worldview and therefore whose abstract terminology was far different from that of India. It is easy to see how the spirit of a religion might change, when the language into which its scriptures were rendered was also changed.

In general, in the history of any religion, there are two schools of missionary endeavor. So it was with the transmission of Buddhism to regions outside India. In one of the older Buddhist sermons it is stated that "The doctrine of the Buddha should be preached to every one on earth in his own language." The phrase "in his own language" is ambiguous. Does it mean the language of the Buddha, or of the nationalities to whom Buddhism is preached? Nobody could say for sure.

The two schools of missionaries that every crusading religion has begotten have followed the two possible interpretations of this old slogan. There were those missionaries, Buddhist as well as Christian, who went to China and realized, since they were unable to talk to the people, that they would have to learn the language and translate their holy texts into it. Thus it has been with our own gospels, but we may well ask whether Christianity in Chinese is still Christi-

anity, just as we may ask the same question of Buddhism. The other school of missionaries sets up language schools, as we teach the Chinese, or taught them until recently, English, so that they may read the scriptures in what, though one of the major tongues of eastern Christian development, was not their original tongue. However accurate the English, French, Italian, or any other Bible may be, it is still not absolutely accurate when compared to the original Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew texts, and indeed is often farcically wide of the mark.

The early Franciscan missionaries, when they went to China, realized the necessity of translating the Bible into Chinese. The first sentence of the Bible, which most of us know by heart, is "In the beginning God created Heaven and earth." The missionaries' difficulties began at once, for in the beginning, *en arche* (Greek), *bereshit* (Hebrew) indicated something immense in both languages, something beyond our time calculation for which the Chinese had no equivalent. The nearest equivalent that could be found was: "Before the time the ten thousand things took on the shape in which they are to be found now, God created Heaven and Earth."

Unfortunately there are so many gods in China that the question was, which one to select. The missionaries chose the term *shang-ti*, a form of heaven, so that the text now reads that heaven created heaven and earth, which would not do. So in this first translation God, as represented by *shang-ti*, or heaven, created only earth. This was certainly a doctrine that the Chinese had not heard before, but on the other hand, it was a doctrine that Christians had not heard before, either.

Later, in the course of their philosophical studies into the nature of Chinese, the Jesuits replaced the term *shang-ti*, or heaven, with the term *tao*, or infinite rule of all being, who now created heaven and earth. One should rather say which, again pointing out the difficulty, for the missionaries thus succeeded in presenting the Chinese not with Christianity, but merely with a new scrap of impersonal Taoist doctrine. The Buddhist missionaries, when they arrived in China, went through exactly the same kind of problem. To understand this problem, it is necessary to examine, however briefly, the Chinese worldview that they encountered; a combination of the earliest classical books of China, Taoism, and Confucianism, both of the latter two derived heavily from the first.

# THE BOOK OF CHANGES AND 9. THE CHINESE WORLD VIEW

IT IS CUSTOMARY TO DIVIDE THE RELIGIONS OF CHINA PRIMARILY into Taoism and Confucianism; to mention surviving primitive cults and Buddhism; and to treat of the *I-Ching* or *Book of Changes* as something of importance only because of its great age. In actuality no such division can be made. The Chinese have succeeded in presenting to the world, and of course have gained for themselves, a conception of nature and philosophy that seems to the more turbulent West, in relation to religious matters, somewhat tepid. The Chinese believe in refinement of manners, and indeed, they are a well-bred people. But this characteristic does make their religious outlook resemble, to a western viewpoint, the more polished attitude of 18th century Deism, which treated religious problems in a gentlemanly manner and preferred to keep God at a distance. "Do nothing to destroy the Established Church," once said an Anglican divine, "it is all that stands between us and God." In this attitude, it must be admitted, there is, from the English viewpoint, considerable truth. There are times when one is apt to conclude that, for the English, or the part of the English population that sees religion as a social function, the act of worship is a form of the higher gardening. And here we may be closer to the truth than we know. English gardening, a form of art that arose at the same time that Deism became popular, that is, in the 18th century, is essentially a form of activity making

nature orderly and polite. On the contrary, Chinese gardening is a symbolic representation of the powers and balances of nature, designed for meditation. On it, English gardening was based through a misunderstanding, chiefly through the works of Sir William Chambers. Similarly, if we contrast what is called the impassivity of the Chinese with stoicism, its European equivalent, we would see the same difference and the same degree of difference, in operation. Stoicism, essentially, and in its everyday form certainly, is used by the individual to preserve his integrated dignity by a refusal to show fear before the onslaught of strong forces exterior to his personality, whether they are personal or natural. It is a form of opposition. The so-called impassivity of the Chinese, on the other hand, is based upon the recognition that Man is only a part of the cosmos, and is as subject to its rules, laws, and occurrences as any other part of it. This impassivity is, in other words, the result of a perceived harmony. Of course, it is more than that, but in the restricted sense we use here, it may be thus defined. The Chinese basically believes in what is called Universism, from which both Taoism and Confucianism derive. This Universism presents us, in its religious aspects, with something of a quandary.

Comparative religion usually takes one of two forms: either it stresses the essential unity of all religions in basic matters; or else it stresses the tremendously varying means of religious expression. As research into such matters becomes more intensive, however, scholars who commence with the assumption that religions exhibit an essential unity end by discovering, through specialized research, that it is easier to find disparity than unity. However, scholars who commence by stressing the enormous differences, and who take particular interest in the controversies of various faiths, end by stating that after all it is one underlying and common insight that allows us to call these differing faiths religions in the first place, as though we had the same essential fluid poured into vessels of a hundred shapes.

The Being of Being that constitutes the goal of all religions, and, as they all agree, is beyond definition or concept, is yet to be found at least hinted at in the texts of every creed. The earlier the religious text in question, the more certain it is to exhibit this ultimate insight. It is only when the prophetic insight gives birth to a formulated creed and so adapts itself to a social function, that this insight takes on as many disguises or secondary manifestations as are evoked by

the special requirements of the particular society to which the faith is adapted. And when such a creed produces foreign missions, then a further adaptation takes place, so that the original vision is often all but lost. At any rate the emphasis will vary, strangely.

Thus we saw the Buddha, whose original insight existed in essence, without a propitiatory framework; later we examined the development of such a framework; and last of all, the machinery of salvation evolved by the later Buddhist sects. The doctrines of the Buddha had hardened into an -ism.

From time to time an emphasis upon the anthropological and psychological aspects of religious tradition becomes particularly important. One such instance occurs when a religion shifts from its cultural matrix into that of another culture. Buddhism, when it spread to China, encountered a vast difficulty in its search for adequate word equivalents that would transmit to the Chinese mentality the basic abstract ideas originally adjusted to the Indian temperament.

Thus it is that we must examine both the general characteristics of the Chinese mind and the impact of Chinese ideographic writing on the entire development of Chinese thought, before we can begin to understand what happened to Buddhism in China and Japan.

Of course it is extremely misleading to make generalizations about any people. Yet, since people do differ from each other even more importantly in their worldview than in external details of custom and habit, a few general points must be made.

One might say, to begin with, that the Chinese do not easily lose their way in details, but are inclined to view the wholeness of things, and to endeavor to establish an over-all and relatively simple pattern by which detail is both viewed and governed. One thing we may most emphatically say about them, on the basis of their art, if nothing else, is that they do not conceive of an anthropocentric world; and that their space concepts are vast and predominantly governed by the horizontal. Concepts of perspective, meaning mental as well as representational perspective, are in the Occident, but in India also, adjusted to the stature of Man, which is conceived to be about five feet. Chinese perspective is nothing of the sort. Chinese perspective is always aerial or bird's-eye, and is not a landscape as seen by Man, but at most a Man seen in a landscape. This concept at the very least implies a certain essential detachment from personal events. In part this condition is explained by the fact that the



Chinese artist works on the floor and looks down at his work, but we must remember that before the relatively late rise of easel painting in the West, the illuminator, on whose efforts even frescoes were based, also looked down at his work. It is true that the earliest Chinese painting of a secular sort to come down to us, dating from the 4th century A.D., is devoted entirely to court figures, but they are surrounded by and isolated in a vast space. It is also true that brick stamping and ritual vases do not depict the world in quite this way; but by the time Buddhism was introduced, at a period when Chinese civilization was at least 2,000 years old, this outlook was firmly entrenched.

The Chinese, too, are more apt to consider the meaning of life as such, than the meaning of an individual life; and thus uniformity and simplicity of statement when dealing with essential ideas, and a certain impersonality as well, have always characterized their thought. All these things show up very clearly in their language, which lacks the inflectional endings that in Indo-European tongues indicate case, gender, number, tense, person, mood, and voice. The relationships between things, various time levels, and number are indicated by word position and by the use of auxiliary words. Interrogatives are expressed, not by a change of word order, but by a particle, which implies that the true difference between a statement and a question is governed not by any difference *per se*, but by the manner in which the matter is regarded.

The written language is not generally orally symbolic, but visually symbolic. For example, the word mountain, to us, has the vaguest of shapes. Whereas to the Chinese, because of the symbol 山 it must always be symmetrical and pyramidal.

Since none of the verbs is inflected, any action is absolute in itself. For example, the act of "to come" is exactly the same in the past, present, and future, and is not modified by the time condition, which is expressed by another word.

If time exists as an auxiliary word, which does not change the written form of the verb, then you can see that time and action will tend to exist quite separately. For us, I come, I came, and I will come, are quite different kinds of movement. For the Chinese the act of coming in itself is an absolute and unvariable act. It is as though time, to the Chinese, were a kind of book with plastic leaves in which we establish the relationship between various events by

placing a marked leaf over transparent leaves, to see who or what was when and in relation to what. Basically this idea means that no matter how much a thing may act or be acted upon, it never loses or modifies its particular identity; and actions, as symbols realized by the eye, exist beyond the time factor. The time factor also exists, but separately, as a symbol realized by the eye. Thus the nature of action exists in an eternal present, at the same time that it exists either in the past, future, or present. This construction has the advantage that the essential nature of action never changes, although at any instant the specific nature of an action may also progress. This double viewpoint is impossible in an inflected language; but it makes it difficult to translate the causal concepts of an inflected language, such as Sanskrit, into an uninflected one.

When we would say I came, the Chinese literally say, I come completed. To us the past tense does not have this aspect of finality, but merely exists in past time. If we are trying to express the idea of a past action that has no finality to it in Chinese, we find it extremely difficult to do so, for we must make use of the auxiliary word

完, 全 finished, completed; which, even though it conveys only

a past action to the Chinese, has also for them the value of something rounded out and done with forever.

A similar problem exists with the matter of number. Where we would say ten oxen, submerging the individual in the herd; the Chinese would say, literally, ten piece ox, where the individual and the group co-exist. Thus, roughly, and at least visually, every element in time and in the phenomenal world, in Chinese, is generic and absolute; and only the relationships between things create an apparent difference, without in any way effecting a real difference in the nature of the thing acted upon.

Thus no relationship and no thing can ever be stated without taking into account its relative placement among other things. Such a view of life brings a keen sense of directional thought: the awareness of where a thing belongs, and an equally keen awareness of when it is out of place, for then it loses its meaning and takes on another meaning.

This idea may be illustrated by a story told by Gustav Meyrink, a Czechoslovakian novelist, who said that a friend once sent him a beautiful box from China, with the remark that the box had been

designed to be placed in an East-West direction. Meyrink had the box unpacked, got out an old compass, and aligned it in an East-West direction on his desk. It did not fit in that way with the other objects on the desk, so they had to be put in an East-West direction also. Then the desk, which faced the other way, had to be turned East-West to accommodate the things on top of it. After that, the room had to be rearranged also, so that with the passage of time the whole house and the garden had to be altered and reoriented, to conform to the direction of one small box that by its position made all other things look out of position. This is a good illustration of the imposing character of the basic concepts of the Chinese heritage, which incline to change one's outlook on life, and to alter the arrangement of our everyday affairs.

A regard for the essential message of every single thing on earth carries with it the characteristics of neutrality, objectivity, or essentiality; attitudes that distinguish Chinese philosophies of life and conduct. Such objectivity quite naturally evokes a certain discipline of the ego, to conform its animal and socially indifferent instincts, so that such a worldview widens out into a systematic view of life and life forms that is purchased at the cost of a certain amount of self-repression. There is always a vastness and tolerance to any Chinese statement, partly because accidental happenings are usually omitted from the worldview. Alongside greater events, the everyday happenings of life seem of little importance. It is only the larger tides of life that have any importance: the ripples are trivial and transitory.

Further, one of the characteristics of the Chinese mentality is an ability to concentrate; and therefore Buddhism, coupled with Yoga and Mahayana doctrine, took root easily in China, where the habit of sitting for long periods of time in meditation was perhaps already ingrained, though some feel that this habit was a result of Buddhism, rather than a receptive condition for its taking root. Be that as it may, the two characteristics have strengthened each other; one the Chinese inclination towards calmness and thought; the other the impact of Buddhist Yoga.

If we put all these various characteristics of the Chinese into one word, their uniformity, simplicity, tendency to view life as a whole, neutrality, objectivity, discipline, and control of the passions and the ego, the vastness of their concepts, and their ability to concen-

trate, we might choose the word "normality." That is the concept the Chinese themselves conceive to be most essential to them. Indeed, they have few terms for capriciousness or extravagance. Normality under all circumstances is the highest value; and they avoid superlatives, either positive or negative, as being highly suspect. Anything that deviates from the norm is held undesirable; and it is a virtue to be average in size, all extremes being egregious, and therefore not good. It is better to be balanced in body and in mind, neither too large or too small, too depressed or unduly excited. In Chinese poetry and art we observe a lack of pathos and of enthusiasm; but it is a lack amply compensated for by the cleanliness and lucidity that are always present.

Such is, more or less, the Chinese ideal. If you want to praise somebody as much as you can, in China, you do not say he is exceptional in this or that, you say that he is normal. The same undeviating normality also characterizes the course of Chinese art, an art based to a large extent upon calligraphy. There are seldom hectic changes of style or manner. The two or three chief methods of painting have been in existence since the Tang dynasty, and the proletarian art of the present, which seems to us novel, is merely ancient folk art given a wider publicity and a different master. Where, in the Occident, changes in iconography and technique have taken at most a generation or two, in China the surge of change is much more gradual. The penalty of this approach has been a stifling antiquarianism, a harking back to the example of the past for its own sake; and a reliance upon example and precedent rather than the specific immediate condition that set China at a disadvantage when it had to face, as it did when the mercantile West invaded the Orient, a set of circumstances not embraced in its worldview. One of the reasons why Lord Napier's embassy to China failed was that Lord Napier had red hair. The Chinese knew from past experience that red hair was a sign of the inferior and subject barbarian. Therefore they affixed to his state barge a large sign saying "laboriously vile," and thought they had dealt with him, as indeed they had. They had no experience however for dealing with the cotton mills of Manchester whose methods had no precedent as far as the Chinese were concerned, and therefore did not exist.

On the other hand, a social framework sturdy and yet elastic enough to take into consideration all indigenous variations had

many advantages. It made personal and social life more settled and more assured. But anything novel that entered such a society was more apt to be praised for a spurious antiquity than for its newness. For instance, if in the West we publish a book, the publisher will probably advertise it by saying that this is the first time a compilation of this sort has been made. If such a claim were made in China, no one would buy the book, for the prospective buyer would reason that if no one had ever thought of such a thing before, then it must be valueless. To draw an arbitrary line, but a very clear one, the West looks to the future for revelation and salvation, the Orient to the past; the West is inductive, the Orient, deductive, in its reasoning. It is the future that overwhelmingly concerns us in the West, to such an extreme that we have a mercantile company like Du Pont de Nemours arduously planning its products and financial status for the year 2,000. In the West our anxiety feelings make it almost impossible for us to conceive of the reality of the present moment. In China the process is reversed, so that the best a man there can do is to live up to the past, not to the future. Even that is seen to be difficult of achievement. The great philosophers of China have always stated not that they brought novelty, but that they only wished to reform the deteriorated values of the past and to restore them to their pristine condition. If an Occidental writes of a Utopia he sets it in the future. If an Oriental does so, he invariably dates his ideal conditions in the remote past, when life was still perfect. In this regard the Chinese are more or less in harmony with the Indians, who also possess a philosophy of historical deterioration.

Such an attitude permeates all levels of life; thus when a man is raised to the status of the nobility in the West, automatically his descendants inherit the title; but if a man is ennobled in China, his ancestors are automatically raised to the title, but his son is not. In China, if a man performs great deeds, he has inherited the ability to do so from his progenitors. For the Chinese, therefore, the meaning of one's life is in its continuation of the chain of antiquity, in living up to a great tradition, and the individual sees himself as the latest link in such a chain. This attitude profoundly influences religious thought.

As we mentioned before, the ideogrammatic nature of the Chinese language powerfully conditions all thought in that language, precisely because it is a picture language. If we read, in some western

language, the word "quarrel," we are not really much the wiser; but when we read the Chinese ideogram for jealousy: 妒 which originally depicted a woman under a roof, then the word jealous has specific overtones and undertones that it in no way has for us. Reading and language, for the Chinese, are not only associative and phonetic, but depictive, and this addition makes a vast difference: for one thing they can recognize meaning instantly. But since ultimate religious terms have no immediate connotative or denotative meaning and should not, by their very nature, have any, you see at once the difficulty involved in translating an abstract religious text into Chinese.

The title of one of the earliest standard texts of Chinese literature and philosophy is *I-Ching*; this can be rendered phonetically in several ways, depending upon the dialect employed, but to the Chi-

nese looks as follows: 易 Chinese has the advantage over phonetic languages that anyone who uses the system of writing can understand anyone else who uses it, no matter what the verbal language may be. Thus in Pekinese, or Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, or Japanese, whatever the word may be in speech, in writing it re-

mains: 易 and this symbol is readily understood. The advantages of having a written language that is intelligible to all those using it, whatever their spoken language may be, is immense. Think of the interchange possible, if, in Europe and America, we shared the same written symbols, as well as numbers, no matter what tongue we spoke.

*I-Ching*, whose symbol probably originally meant chameleon, a lizard that changes its color according to its surroundings, is the *Book of Changes*, or *Chameleon Book*. It is something of an oddity, for it is an oracular book, one that has to be applied to magical practice, rather than read. It is so ancient that it consists of signs that can rarely be rendered into any modern western language, and that in Chinese need commentaries and glosses, for the signs stand for extremely primitive concepts that time has extensively changed.

The book is ascribed to the legendary emperor, Fu Hsi, who is supposed to have reigned about the year 3322 B.C. The emperor,



so it is said, was sitting by the shores of the Yellow River when a dragon horse jumped from the water. The emperor sketched the mark that he saw on the back of the dragon horse, which was a map of the universe. In 1143 B.C. King Wang simplified the map and organized it according to mathematical principles; and his son, the Duke of Kou, created out of that the present *Book of Changes*. Such at any rate is its legendary history, and certainly the text is extremely old. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) rearranged it and wrote a commentary upon it, and one of the standard practices of Chinese philosophers was to write such a commentary, just as Christian theologians wrote commentaries on the New Testament, that being the best way in which they could express their own ideas without losing themselves too far in the often heretical dangers of individual thought.

As originally designed by Fu Hsi and King Wang, the book of I-Ching consisted of combinations of two single lines, one like this: — and one like this: — — which appeared in various combinations.


The single line was referred to as the yang; and the broken line as the yin. As they are combined, trigrams, or combinations of three lines, appear, forming the circle that is the basic map of the universe.

The ideogram for yang depicts bright sunlight breaking through clouds, or, roughly, the fertilizing principle; and the ideogram for yin depicts dark clouds accumulating, or the parturitive principle; male and female, light and dark. There are also many other meanings, so that in general yang and yin form a dualistic cosmic scheme that divides the world into constant and interminable antagonistic principles. Thus yang is fire, yin water; yang sky, yin earth; yang father, yin mother; yang hot, yin cold; yang dry, yin wet; yang bright, yin dark; yang expanding, yin contracting; yang upwards, yin downwards; yang extrovert, yin introvert; yang pure, yin dull; yang the sun, yin the moon.

Given such a duality, Mankind has been able to do almost everything with it, either combining it or dividing it, to cover all phenomenal experience. Yet it is odd that it is difficult to find anywhere in Chinese, or for that matter, Japanese mythology the hermaphroditic or androgynous primal deity who stands behind so many other religions. To solve this problem the Chinese depict yang and yin each with a part of the other in its makeup, achieving a

system akin to that of Victor Hugo, who attributed good and evil to the temporary containment in an entity of a more or less accidental balance of positive and negative particles, a refinement on Lucretius made possible by the 19th century enthusiasm for the theory of electricity. We would agree, even psychologically, with a great many of the yang and yin oppositions, if they were merely meant to be cosmic symbols of psychological states, but they are not meant to be just that. They are meant to embrace all aspects of reality, the outer as well as the inner.

The identification of male and female with positive and negative, outgoing and intaking, projecting and receiving, is one of the great discoveries of the human mind, and one of the basic tools of its intellectual process. In the history of intellectual development it is as important as the discovery of the artificial production of fire was to Man's physical well-being. That things should be one, but contain both or all; and that things should all be contained in one, are later developments of such a basic notion. Thus the symbol of the un-

ion of yang and yin, as it exists today:  is a profound one,

for it recognizes not only that each of two concepts partakes of the other, and thus may become the other, by the diminution or addition of one or the other of its quantities, but also that both together form, or are contained, in one, so that neither of any two concepts possible is ever the absolute whole truth. We can see, as soon as we look at it, that this is an abstract symbol applying to process and identity, but not tied down to a specific shape. Unlike the swastika, the lotus, or the wheel, the yang and yin symbols are not localized in a specific referential shape. Therefore they are literally all-embracing.

In contradistinction to this symbol, the map of the universe as drawn by Fu Hsi in 3332 B.C. is both more complex and less all-embracing. It looks like the illustration on page 290.

On the top are three yang lines: the highest possible accumulation of light; the sun, expanding force, and life vitality. At the bottom, although its position does not refer to its relative moral value, but only to its opposition in the power field, is the triple yin line, the highest concentration of the feminine, the moon, contracting darkness, water, and the introvertive. As far as time is concerned, this

circle might be considered a 24-hour watch, with the light of high noon above, the darkness of midnight below. On the sides one can trace the shifting from the predominantly yang to the predominantly yin, as we go farther out from the source towards the half-way, or neutral, point.

We might better illustrate the symbol if we say that it is a psychological and moral compass, with the ultimate positive principle at north, the ultimate negative principle at south, and east



and west exact, though opposite, mixtures of each. If we ask why each direction is seen as a bundle of three, we might answer that all things have a middle, a beginning, and an end; an outer envelope, a middle, and a core. Any additional sections partake of the overlapping areas of these three combinations.

The main idea of the entire *I Ching* is that circumstances are always changing, though in the same variable but predictable circular track. You cannot stay put even if you want to, for all the forces outside yourself in which the yang and yin elements are constantly changing strength and position will shift your position, whether you move or not, for you are not only acting, or yang, in your own nature; you are also acted upon, or yin.

This cyclical and endless alternation, which is reflected in all things, leaves man with only one tenable position; acting in a manner consonant with whatever the yang and yin balance may be in whatever circumstances he may find himself. Thus, in age, declining towards the inert, he must not try to sparkle or to be a young

man; and the same is true of women. On the other hand, in his youth he must not try to behave with the decorum of an elder, either. The inner and outer worlds must be attuned to each other correctly for their time, place, and relationship. To be introvert, or yin, in one's youth, when yang predominates, is improper; but to be extrovert in one's age, when yin predominates, is equally improper. Therefore normality, the highest virtue in any Chinese philosophical system, consists in a correspondence between attitude and circumstances, in conforming to the season, the occasion, and the hour. Badness or error consists in working against circumstances, in attempting to achieve something improper to one's abilities, condition, or time. For instance, singing evening melodies in the morning would be improper, as would singing Christmas hymns in May, being a long-distance swimmer when one has small lungs, or a public benefactor when one has a small purse, or a miser when one has a big one. In the West we are offended by that sort of thing, but the Chinese is offended much more. Seasonableness is seen to be the chief virtue in life.

The chief symbol of the *Book of Changes*, the trigrams forming a hexagram, is one of almost infinite ramification. The successive movement of this diagram, from triple positive yang through triple negative yin and so back again, constitutes what the Chinese call the cause of things, or tao.

In its breadth and greatness the I-Ching corresponds to heaven and earth; in its ever-recurring changes, it corresponds to the four seasons; in its mention of the bright or active, and the dark or inactive operation, it corresponds to the sun and moon; and the excellence seen in the ease and ready response (*of its various operations*) corresponds to the perfect operations (*presented to us in the phenomena of nature*).

The Master said:—Is not the I-Ching a perfect book? It was by the I-Ching that the sages exalted their virtue, and enlarged their sphere of occupation. Their wisdom was high, and their rules of conduct were solid. That loftiness was after the pattern of heaven; that solidity, after the pattern of earth.<sup>1</sup>

Living up to the hour and to the prevailing conditions of the universe at any given time is the highest virtue in China. There is no virtue in either belittling something or in treating it in terms of superlatives. The Chinese idea is normality; not conforming to

<sup>1</sup> Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XVI, pp. 358-359.

the average, but rather fulfilling the given conditions at any given time. If at noontime you are alert and vigorous, the yang powers are at their height, nobody will take any exception to your behavior. If at midnight you sleep, that is in line with the degree of yin prevalent at that hour. But if you are asleep at noon, then you deviate from the standard conditions and offend everyone. All actions are governed by the patterns suitable to them, the ideal is the nonegregious act, and so we have the Confucian books of behavior and their *raison-d'être*.

It might be useful here to examine one such pattern from the *I Ching*, chosen at random, the Wu Wang Hexagram, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Section One:



Wu Wang indicates great progress and success while there will be advantage in being firm and correct. If (*its subject and his action*) be not correct, he will fall into errors, and it will not be advantageous for him to move in any direction.

1. The first line, undivided, shows its subject free from all insincerity. His advance will be accompanied with good fortune.

2. The second line, divided, shows one who reaps without having ploughed (*that he might reap*), and gathers the produce of his third year's fields without having cultivated them the first year for that end. To such a one there will be advantage in whatever direction he may move.

3. The third line, divided, shows calamity happening to one who is free from insincerity;—as in the case of an ox that has been tied up. A passer by finds it (*and carries it off*) while the people in the neighborhood have the calamity of (*being accused and apprehended*).

4. The fourth line, undivided, shows (*a case*) in which, if its subject can remain firm and correct, there will be no error.

5. The fifth line, undivided, shows one who is free from insincerity, and yet has fallen ill. Let him not use medicine, and he will have occasion for joy (*in his recovery*).

6. The topmost line, undivided, shows its subject free from insincerity, yet sure to fall into error, if he take action. (*His action*) will not be advantageous in any way.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., pp. 109-111.

The *Book of Changes* represents one paragraph by King Wang explaining each hexagram, as a whole, and six paragraphs by the Duke of Kuo explaining the individual lines.

To this are added seven appendixes, or treatises upon the text. Appendix I tells us:

In Wu Wang we have the strong (*first*) line come from the outer (*trigram*), and become in the inner trigram lord (*of the whole figure*); we have (*the attributes of*) motive power and strength; we have the strong line (*of the fifth place*) in the central position, and responded to (*by the weak second*):—there will be "great progress" proceeding from correctness; such is the appointment of Heaven.

"If (*its subject and his actions*) be not correct, he will fall into errors, and it will not be advantageous for him to move in any direction:" whither can he (*who thinks he is*) free from all insincerity, (*and yet is as here described*) proceed? Can anything be done (*advantageously*) by him whom the (*will and*) appointment of Heaven do not help?<sup>3</sup>

Appendix II tells us:

The thunder rolls all under the sky, and to (*everything*) there is given (*its nature*), free from all insincerity. The ancient kings, in accordance with this, (*made their regulations*) in complete accordance with the seasons, thereby nourishing all things.

1. When "he who is free from insincerity makes any movement," he will get what he desires.

2. He reaps without having ploughed:—(*the thought of*) riches to be got had not risen (*in his mind*).

3. The passer-by gets the ox:—this proves a calamity to the people of the neighborhood.

4. If he can remain firm and correct there will be no error:—he firmly holds fast (*his correctness*).

5. Medicine in the case of one who is free from insincerity—it should not be tried (*at all*).

6. The action (*in this case*) of one who is free from insincerity will occasion the calamity arising from action (*when the time for it is*) exhausted.<sup>4</sup>

Appendix III is a general treatise on the *I Ching*, its meaning, excellence, universality, and history, and is supposedly by Confucius. Appendix IV is also supposed by the Chinese to be by Confucius, but is a discussion of the first two hexagrams only. Appendix V is a discussion of the ultimate meaning of the trigrams. Appendix VI is a treatise on the orderly sequence of the trigrams.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., pp. 233-234.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., p. 299.




Things cannot be done away for ever. When decadence and overthrow have completed their work at one end, re-integration commences at the other; and hence Po is followed by Fu. When the return (*thus indicated*) has taken place, we have not any rash disorder, and Fu is followed by Wu Wang. Given the freedom from disorder and insincerity (*which this name denotes*), there may be the accumulation (*of virtue*), and Wu Wang is followed by Ta Khu.<sup>5</sup>


Appendix VII is a random poetical treatise on the hexagrams, according to the opposition or diversity of their meaning. From it we learn:


26. Ta Khu keeps still, and waits the proper time.

25. Wu Wang sets forth how evil springs from crime.<sup>6</sup>


The text and the seven appendixes are seen to govern all human actions. King Wang, when he was still Duke of Kou, revised the *Book of Changes* in about 1143 B.C. While he was in prison preparing to inaugurate a new dynasty, he had nothing to read, but he did have some toothpicks with him. Out of these he formed the trigrammatic hexagon to which we have already referred. How many hexagrams can you create, if you have eight trigrams, but always have to put two trigrams together into one hexagram? The answer is sixty-four. So the noon hour, in the larger hexagram,

looks this way: yang yang yang—yang yang yang;  the

fullness or power of yang. The midnight hour similarly has six yin signs, or the fullest power of femininity:  A minute after

noon the shadows of evening begin to fall, so the element of yin enters into yang, from the center. Thus:  One minute be-

fore midnight you have the reverse situation, the smallest amount

of yang:  in a precarious place, bound to vanish with

the next movement of nature. The changes come from within. Only when they are well advanced do they become apparent.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., p. 435.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., p. 441.

So the inner nature is constantly changing, but is not visible until the change is complete.

In its complete, or double hexagrammatic form, the *I Ching* has been used throughout the ages as an oracular book. The Fungshui science of the ancient magicians, or the science of wind and weather, is still in use today.

For example, if you wish to build a house, you summon a Fungshui scientist who ascertains the right kind of building site and tells you about the nearness or farness of water and the wind direction, from which he determines how high the house must stand, which way it should face, and even what kind of trees should protect and give it shelter from which side. He does so chiefly by throwing lots; in other words, by asking the collective subconscious forces of nature what they advise by letting them blow small bamboo sticks this way and that. He is not supposed to throw the sticks, but he is to become impersonal and allow the wind to pluck them up. There are six sticks, to conform to the great hexagram.

Let us hypothetically cast these sticks. The six are painted white on one side, to stand for yang, and dark on the other, to stand for yin. First we endeavor to abolish the ego and to become one and impersonal with the forces of nature. We evolve the question foremost in one's mind, rather foremost in the subconscious, and then cast the sticks outward, one after the other, so they fall in a line. One reads the line outward. Perhaps the reading is yin, yang, yin, yin, yin, yin. One consults a copy of the *I-Ching* and looks up the one of the sixty-four symbols the six sticks have reproduced, together with the commentaries upon it. Then one reads commentaries on the commentaries. As late as 1912, the University of Peking still had an examination in which the examinees were placed in a closed room for three days to write about the full implications of one hexagram in the *I-Ching*, including all the interrelations of one line with the others, in all possible aspects, together with their psychological, sociological, and natural aspects. The literature is vast.

Let us take an example. According to Confucius the trigram representing wood and that for earth with wood growing on it forms "shan." The superior man, in accordance with the idea of this symbol, pays careful attention to his virtue and accumulates it until

it has become great. If the first line shows its subject advancing upward to the welcome of those about him, there will be great good fortune. The superior man who is the foundation of a fortunate situation has a feminine yin element in him. Therefore he is in harmony with those who have femininity in them, otherwise he would not be able to talk to them. The second line, which in this case is yang, assures its subject that sincerity that will make even the smallest offering acceptable is his. The sincerity of the subject predicted by the second throwing stick affords occasion for joy; and the third stick, again yin, is called the empty city because it is all composed of yin. The subject, being full of sincerity, need not fear the yin power, to which the yang power of his sincerity is equal. The fourth line or stick, according to the commentary, shows its subject employed by the king to present an offering on Mount Pi, another emblem of good fortune, the symbolism being that the service to spiritual beings is in accord with their desires. The fifth line, divided, and therefore yin, shows its subject firmly correct and therefore enjoying good fortune. The topmost line, divided, shows the subject advancing upward blindly. He blindly follows the correct path to fortune, in other words, but misfortune is in store for him. Here we get a little drop of bitterness at the end, for good fortune can never be indefinitely prolonged.

This interpretation may seem like nothing but vulgar fortunetelling, but in actuality the terms, and the commentaries upon them, are so general, so apt for interpretation, and the basic principles of combining positive and negative factors so exact, that the entire system can usually be applied at least in part to almost any situation with psychological truth. Its adaptability is so great because it plunges down to the subconscious level of the mind, where matters are far less apt to have a specific reference than to exist on the level of opposition or harmony of disparate forces.

Thus psychologists have found the *I-Ching* of use in analysis, for after all, one need not use sticks. The two sides of a coin will do as well. There is a translation by the German sinologist Richard Wilhelm that throws much light on the psychological aspects of the *I-Ching*.

At any rate we may definitely say that as a system of thought the *I-Ching* underlies almost all Chinese philosophy, in one way or another, and an understanding of it is indispensable to a consid-

eration of the *Tao te King*, or *Book of Lao Tse*. As Taoism lent its terminology to the Chinese translations of Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, we have had to discuss the *I-Ching* in order to understand the *Tao te King*, so that further on we may understand the later development of Buddhism in China and Japan.

LAO TSE, WHICH IS NOT A PROPER NAME, BUT MERELY MEANS Old Master, is generally considered to have been born circa 604 B.C. Sinologists place the date two or three hundred years either way, but 604 is the traditional date.<sup>1</sup> According to legend, Lao Tse was carried in his mother's womb not for 10 months, as in the case of the Buddha, but for 82 years. One way or another, some fable of miraculous birth gathers about any great religious leader. It is, however, the longest parturition on record. Lao Tse was thus born as an old man with a long white beard and a wrinkled face. Despite this appearance, he immediately went down on the floor and began to perform in the manner of a small child. He was carrying out the great Chinese principle of filial piety. He did not do so for long, but nonetheless, he conformed to the pattern society demanded. But having been born at the age of 82, when he began to grow older, he aged very rapidly and lived to a vast age. Since old men were rare in those days, as such he was exceptional and was considered a great sage. No doubt the legend about his age reflects an outward aspect of his wisdom. In China an old man is not merely a person who by chance has survived the ravages of time, disease, and his own offspring, and who no longer fulfills any useful social function. On the contrary, he is regarded as a person who, by reason of his longer experience, has much to teach.


We are told very little about Lao Tse. We learn that he was a librarian in the Court service, and legend would have it that in his old age he left China to travel westward, either to India, or to the glorious Buddhist paradise of Sukhavati. Clearly he went west in

<sup>1</sup> Modern scholars question whether he lived at all, a few claiming him to have been invented by Chuang-Tzu, his supposed disciple.

search of further wisdom, but since we do not know the exact date of the legends, we cannot say where this wisdom was thought to be located.

It is stated that the Chinese frontier officials would not allow Lao Tse to leave China without an export license for his possessions. Lao Tse had nothing with him, and explained that all he possessed was his philosophy, and that was in his mind. The customs inspector said that in that case he would have to leave his wisdom in China before departing, so Lao Tse sat at the border for three days and wrote down the *Tao te King*. The book is so succinct that it could easily have been written in three days, and could be read in half an hour. On the other hand, one could also spend a year on it, depending upon how thoroughly one read it. The *Tao te King* deals with the highest word concept of the Chinese language, the word tao.

It is not of importance that we know the doubtful English phonetic rendering of the word, but it is important that we know the Chinese ideogram and its meaning. Tao is, so to speak, the course of nature, or what we might call seasonableness; the agreement of circumstances with the needs of the hour. It might therefore just as well be placed in the center of the yang-yin hexagram of the *Yi-Ching*.

The ideogram:  is supposedly a picture of a head. The

other part of the ideogram is an abbreviation of the walking-man sign, so tao is a head-walking, or headway, or mainroad. There are several hundred translations of the expression tao in various European languages. The ramifications of any Chinese ideogram are so diverse, and the ramifications of its relation with other ideograms in a certain order so multiform, that no one translation can ever deal with all of them. It is as though we were to try to compress the twenty-four simple meanings of the French verb "garder," not to mention their cognate meanings, into one word, together with the twenty-one meanings, let us say, of the word "eau" to which it might be found in as many multiple relations. It is like that, but it is also worse. Thus one sees that even in a book as brief as the *Tao te King* the possibilities are almost infinite. Even in China the reading of ideograms, let alone the translation of them, is a



great art. For that matter, to take an Occidental symbol at random, what does a cross with equidistant arms mean? It may mean any one of a hundred different things, or all of them, even though we understand it quite differently when it is a silent symbol than when we connect it with the word for which it stands. The difference between an original and a translation is always great. But when we are translating things that are both words *and* visual symbols, the difference is all the greater. The first sentence of the *Tao te King* may make this matter clear:

Tao ko Tao Fei Chang Tao, 道可道非常道

We find the word tao itself three times. Ko is something like a genitive participle or relative pronoun, and means relation. Tao, insofar as it is termed tao is not the real tao, in other words. Fei means not. Chang; the real, eternal, or basically existent. So this sentence means that the Being of Being, insofar as it is expressed in terms of existence, is not the Being of Being that we really mean as the light that stands behind all things. Or, in the words of Meister Eckhart, "Our mind does not want God insofar as He is God. Why not? Because there He has names, and even if there would be a thousand, our mind penetrates them all more and more because it wants Him there where He has no names."

The very fact that tao is reflected in the mind means that the conception fails to be even the projection of the light we are talking about:

The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name.<sup>2</sup>

Lao Tse goes on with his metaphysical exposition to prove that tao cannot be expressed in human terms or discussed, because once we try to do so, we lose it. As long as we do not try to conceive of it, however, it is there all the time. Thus we interpret the opening sentence of the *Tao te King*. But it could be interpreted in many other ways, for it is an arrangement of negatives and positives with no concrete root or externalized and specific statement.

<sup>2</sup> James Legge, trans., *The Sacred Books of China, The Texts of Confucianism*, p. 47.

There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (*of being exhausted*)! It may be regarded as the Mother of all things.

I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the Tao (*the Way or Course*). Making an effort (*further*) to give it a name I call it The Great.

Great, it passes on (*in constant flow*.) Passing on, it becomes remote. Having become remote, it returns. Therefore the Tao is great; Heaven is great; Earth is great; and the (*sage*) king is also great. In the universe there are four that are great, and the (*sage*) king is one of them.

Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Tao. The law of the Tao is its being what it is.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless Lao Tse has written an entire book about the inexpressibility of tao. He endeavors to exposit this inexpressibility by means of parables, showing what Tao could be called if one wished to explain it, though it is better not to do so. The Buddha also used examples, in exactly the same way, in discussing nirvana without defining it, because he believed it to be undefinable. The Buddha says only that nirvana is like sparks that fly from the anvil when the hammer strikes it; like the oil lamp that burns out because one forgot to refuel it. Lao Tse uses the same technique:

There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, and yet for attacking things that are firm and strong there is nothing that can take precedence of it;—for there is nothing (*so effectual*) for which it can be changed.

Every one in the world knows that the soft overcomes the hard, and the weak the strong, but no one is able to carry it out in practice.

Therefore the sage has said:

He who accepts his state's reproach,  
Is hailed therefore its altars' lord;  
To him who bears men's direful woes  
They all the name of King accord.

Words that are strictly true seem to be paradoxical.<sup>4</sup>

and:

The highest excellence is like (*that of*) water. The excellence of water appears in its benefiting all things, and in its occupying, without striving (*to the contrary*), the low place which all men dislike. Hence (*its way*) is near to (*that of*) the Tao.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

It is necessary to speak of Tao in parabolic terms, for:

The Tao, considered as unchanging, has no name. As soon as it proceeds to action, it has a name.<sup>5</sup>

So he uses the simile of water. Tao is not water, but it is like water because it seeks the lowest places and never stands high: that is, it is humble, insofar as it knows and finds its own place, and does not aspire to be higher than it is. Also, like water, it is the strongest and most powerful element on earth, for through yielding, like water, you achieve success.

We all know some of the thousands of Taoist, Zen, and Buddhist brush paintings of a waterfall cascading down over rocks. Such pictures are not meant to be depictive. They have a quality that we sense, apart from what they show, for they are visible sermons and aids to meditation. They are designed to say that water tumbling over rocks yields entirely to the shape of the rocks, as it would to a vessel into which it might be poured. It takes the shape it is allowed, at least for a time; yet if you look again after a lapse of geologic time you would see that the rocks have taken on the shape of the water-flow, their corners are rounded off. Pictures of waterfalls are frequently given as wedding presents in the Orient, for what happens when a man (yang) and a woman (yin) live together? The man sets the pattern of living and the woman yields, but the more she yields, the more interesting and unexpected will be the outcome. This attitude of not actually struggling to perform any action, out of conformity to passing circumstances, is the highest ethical principle of Taoism and is called the wu-wei. Usually, wu-wei is translated inaccurately as "not doing," giving the impression that Taoism is a doctrine of passive inactivity.

This is not the true meaning, for the word wu does not mean not in the sense of pure negation, as it does in English. The ideogram for wu originally meant: "forty men disappear in the woods." If you ask what happens to forty men who disappear in the woods, the answer is, nothing at all, they are merely no longer visible. So it is with wu as a negative. It does not mean a total negation, but rather an absence from the immediate scene. Wu-wei is therefore an imperative: act in such a way as forty men who disappear into the woods do. In other words, to translate the matter into the terms of

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 52, 74.

Kant's categorical imperative, to act in such a way that your action and the results of your actions are not noticeable, either to yourself or to others, for they should fit so smoothly into the surroundings and circumstances that they will not be egregious. If so: He who does not fail in the requirements of his position continues long.<sup>6</sup>

On this matter Lao Tse is extremely explicit:

The skilful traveller leaves no traces of his wheels or footsteps; the skilful speaker says nothing that can be found fault with or blamed; the skilful reckoner uses no tallies; the skilful closer needs no bolts or bars, while to open what he has shut will be impossible.<sup>7</sup>

It is perhaps interesting that even when we discuss tao, we have to use such words as improper, proper, egregious, which are hardly ever used in current speech to define correct behavior. They were so used in the 18th century, when an appropriate and unostentatious conduct was emphasized by the social compact as highly as it has ever been in the Anglo-Saxon-American cultural stream.

Such conduct, to which nothing need be added, and from which nothing can be taken away without changing its nature, we found enunciated in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, or *Song of the Lord*. The God Krishna tells the hero, Arjuna, not to choose either akarma, or inactivity, or karma, which was vigorous action for the sake of specific ends, but to seek Nishkama karma, the kind of action that is gratuitous, performed for no goal of the self, but as an instrument of the divine force that acts through us, if we do not impede it with our personal selfishness.

In the literature that touches more or less directly upon any possible expression of the Being of Being by means of words, the book of tao stands as one of the best metaphysics. Unfortunately like all such pure sources, tao hardens with the passage of time into an -ism, the colloidal suspension of its approach to the ineffable precipitating out into dogma and ritual. Mystical insight into the Being of Being is a personal, and not a social matter. So when such an insight is adjusted to the needs of those who cluster round the original master, very odd things are apt to happen. In the case of the system of Lao Tse, what happened was that his original insight solidified into a system of necromancy. Today most of the

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

light-blue gowned Taoist monks and priests of China, far from being infallible philosophers, are sorcerers, soothsayers, and magicians of the lowest kind. Consequently there are very few enlightened persons who call themselves Taoists, and as Taoists, they are not appreciated as serious scholars. The hexagram of the *I-Ching*, from the form of a parable of the greater nature forces, deteriorated into a dream and magic book, and so too, did Tao.

A Chinese friend of the author's once took him to see a Taoist scholar, who lived in a tiny hermitage in the mountain ranges north of Hong Kong, in a condition of utmost simplicity. When asked if he thought the great spirit of the ancient tradition of tao was still alive, the scholar, who was fat, began to laugh until his belly shook. That was his only answer. Whether he was laughing at the impertinence of the question or at the irony of the answer was not clear. It is for the reader to decide. But no matter what Taoism is now, the book of tao remains. It is really a series of meditations upon the nature of tao, which, as we know from the first sentence of the *Tao te King*, cannot be the great tao if it can be expressed, the great tao being inexpressible. The second chapter of the *Tao te King* is particularly celebrated:

All in the world know the beauty of the beautiful, and in doing this they have (*the idea of*) what ugliness is; they all know the skill of the skilful, and in doing this they have (*the idea of*) what the want of skill is.

So it is that existence and non-existence give birth the one to (*the idea of*) the other; that difficulty and ease produce the one (*the idea of*) the other. . . .

Therefore the sage manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, by overemphasizing one quality, we only serve to evoke its opposite. Or perhaps, as in all things, beauty in this sense is not the norm, but an extreme, on the eternal teeter-totter of yang and yin, so that by bearing all emphasis upon it, we only serve to drag it down and to make its opposite rise. In the last line, "teaching without words," is literally "not speaking talk," which is not quite the same thing. However, since we have seen that wu-wei does not mean without action, but acting in such a way that neither

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

the action nor the result of the action is glaringly visible, we might reconsider the role of the sage. Emerson mentions somewhere that Socrates said: "All my good is magnetic; and I educate not by lessons, but by going about my business." We also have the old saw about education consisting of Mark Hopkins at one end of a log and the pupil at the other. For education is not only an instruction in opinion and fact. It also deals with the transmission of a good deal of ineffable material that can only be conveyed by a form of osmosis. The Chinese sage, and in particular the sage envisioned by Lao Tse, did not only teach by example. He also taught by presence. This, clearly, was also the great strength of the Buddha, as it is of any revealed personality. When we read the great and momentous political speeches of the past, even of the immediate past, they make no impression on us at all. We wonder how they made their effect. If we have ever seen a first-rate actress in a fifth-rate play we would know how instantly. A great sage or teacher actually transmits, not information, except incidentally, but his personality, more or less intact. But this personality is not his personal ego, so much as it is a living mind modified by a special type of or series of experiences. Like a great artist, his skill consists in being able to transmit the insights he has received, which usually have little or nothing to do with the form in which he wraps them, so to speak, or even with his own ego. The artist, like the teacher, if inspired, has not only his own personal ego, but also an impersonal persona. It is the insights impressed upon this that he transmits. Rembrandt's "*Side of Beef*"; Chardin's pots and pans; Winslow Homer's trout streams, and Milton's *Paradise Lost* deal with matters far different than their subject matter. Thus, we can conjecture, the Buddha, though never describing nirvana, managed to convey its nature very well to his immediate disciples, for though we do not find the matter in his recorded texts, he had at his disposal the 84 principal mudras, or hand and body postures that, when we see them, still convey something to us, even if we do not know their precise symbolic meaning.

In this regard, it is not without interest that Buddhist sculpture in China, with the exception of the lotus postures, favored more than any other position "the posture of heavenly ease" of Kwannon.

In the *Tao te King*, Lao Tse mentions the god concept only once, in Section four:



The Tao is (*like*) the emptiness of a vessel; and in our employment of it we must be on our guard against all fulness. How deep and unfathomable it is, as if it were the Honoured Ancestor of all things!

How pure and still the Tao is, as if it would ever so continue.<sup>9</sup>

This is very much like the hymn to creation in the *Rig Veda*:

Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?

The gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?<sup>10</sup>

The *Tao te King* is extremely sparse and laconic, much more succinct than anything to be found in the *Vedas*. Also, the general impression is one of more impersonality and detachment. Even the parables and similes are fleetingly brief.

The highest excellence is like (*that of*) water. The excellence of water appears in its benefiting all things, and in its occupying, without striving, (*to the contrary*), the low place which all men dislike. Hence (*its way*) is near to (*that of*) the Tao.<sup>11</sup>

To have acquired unadulterated fame:



yang yang yang

yang yang yang; and then to be ready to retire:



accepting

the fact that yin, as it should, is entering one's life from the inside and not from exterior causes, is the Tao of heaven. Heaven, too, bends down, and the sun leaves the highest point in the afternoon.

Clay is fashioned into vessels; but it is on their empty hollowness that their use depends.<sup>12</sup>

You don't want the glass or the brass or the clay, when you buy a vessel, you want the empty space, or capacity to carry liquid. The thing itself is worth nothing, but its ability, or emptiness, to receive is what is worth having. Man is worth nothing. His ability to receive insight is worth everything.

The door and windows are cut out (*from the walls*) to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space (*within*), that its use depends.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>10</sup> Ralph T. H. Griffith, trans., *Hymns of the Rig-Veda* (Benares: E. J. Lazarus and Co., 1896), p. 129.

<sup>11</sup> *The Sacred Books of China*, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

This sentence has been applied to Chinese and Japanese art, with their emphasis upon what is not to be seen in the picture, usually considered as more important than the actual lines the painter draws. Watch what he has left out, instead of concentrating on what he has drawn, and it usually becomes apparent that what he has drawn is there only so that what he left out may be noticed by contrast. Thus Hia Kouei's famous Landscape of a storm in autumn, shows only a man bending under an umbrella, a tree blowing in the wind, and grasses blowing on the edge of a cliff. The rest of the paper is bare. Ying Yu-Kien's "Fog Parting From A Village in the Mountains" consists of six rocks, three rooftops, and two bleed-edge washes, plus two small figures each drawn with not more than three brushstrokes apiece; yet the picture is vast. The same is true of music. It is the interval, not the note, that is important there. Psychologically this idea is akin to some of the ideas behind the Yoga practices of India, in particular the attempt to abolish the personal ego, to act in an average way, and not to be noticed any longer insofar as one's work is no more worthy of notice than one is oneself.

In the *Shih King*, the *Book of Odes* put into order by Confucius, but much older than his time (6th century B.C.) we may read the "Ode in Praise of Ancestors":

Small is the cooing dove,  
But it flies aloft up to heaven.  
My heart is wounded with sorrow, and I think of our forefathers.  
When the dawn is breaking, and I cannot sleep,  
The thoughts in my breast are of our parents.

Men who are grave and wise,  
Though they drink, are mild and masters of themselves;  
But those who are benighted and ignorant  
Are devoted to drink, and more so daily.  
Be careful, each of you, of your deportment;—  
What heaven confers, when once lost, is not regained.

We must be mild, and humble,  
As if we were perched on trees.  
We must be anxious and careful,  
As if we were on the brink of a valley.  
We must be apprehensive and cautious, as if we were treading upon  
thin ice.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Muller, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. III, p. 359.

Lao Tse quotes this passage almost exactly when he says that the man of tao, in old times:

The skilful masters (*of the Tao*) in old times, with a subtle and exquisite penetration, comprehended its mysteries, and were deep so as to elude men's knowledge. As they were thus beyond men's knowledge, I will make an effort to describe of what sort they appeared to be.

Shrinking looked they like those who wade through a stream in winter; irresolute like those who are afraid of all around them; grave like a guest (*in awe of his host*); evanescent like ice that is melting away; unpretentious like wood that has not been fashioned into anything; vacant like a valley, and dull like muddy water.<sup>16</sup>

This example of ice is an ever-present one, even in painting. "He is simple like wood that is not yet wrought," explains why Taoist monks and priests have always liked to go about with sticks that they have just broken from trees, and to sit on benches that still show the natural form of the tree. Europeans did the same thing in 18th-century gardens, under the combined influence of Sir William Chambers' Chinese gardening, the French *jardin anglaise*, and the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

"He is vacant like valleys that are hollow." The hollow valley in the language of Lao Tse always refers to the lowest part of the yang-yin hexagram, which is pure yin. One must enter both valleys and heights, and not stay exclusively in either, for failure to enter both would be to attempt to disrupt the natural alternations of life. "Because he is not full, therefore when he becomes decayed, he can renew." In other words, since he is always willing to accept change, and in himself contains both opposed elements, if one fails, then he will be renewed in the other and so start upward again.

Speaking in his character as the prototype of the sage, Lao Tse says:

I am like an infant which has not yet smiled. I look dejected and forlorn, as if I had no home to go to. The multitude of men all have enough and to spare. I alone seem to have lost everything. My mind is that of a stupid man; I am in a state of chaos.

Ordinary men look bright and intelligent, while I alone seem to be benighted. They look full of discrimination, while I alone am dull and confused.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *The Sacred Books of China*, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

The word dull, as we saw in the yang-yin hexagrams, in the sense of slightly tarnished, and so not blatantly new or attention-catching, like old rather than new metal, is to be considered a virtue, not a vice.

I seem to be carried about as on the sea, drifting as if I had nowhere to rest. All men have their spheres of action, while I alone seem dull and incapable, like a rude borderer. (*Thus*) I alone am different from other men, but I value the nursing-mother (*the Tao*).<sup>17</sup>

This passage, far from being a piece of self-flagellation, is a recitation of the virtues of the sage who follows the Way. The Mother, in this passage, is the female yin element, as recurrent as water in Taoist symbolism. The man who is retiring in this way is truly wise.

To be sparing of words is natural:

A violent wind does not last for a whole morning; a sudden rain does not last for the whole day. To whom is it that these (*two*) things are owing, To Heaven and Earth. If Heaven and Earth cannot make such (*spasmodic*) actings last long, how much less can man!

Hence, those with whom he agrees as to the Tao have the happiness of attaining to it; those with whom he agrees as to its manifestation have the happiness of attaining to it; and those with whom he agrees in their failure have also the happiness of attaining (*to the Tao*). (*But*) when there is not faith sufficient (*on his part*), a want of faith (*in him*) ensues (*on the part of the others*).<sup>18</sup>

In other words, excessive action collapses of its own weight and is self-frustrating.

He who stands on his tiptoes does not stand firm; he who stretches his legs does not walk (*easily*). (*So*), he who displays himself does not shine; he who asserts his own views is not distinguished; he who vaunts himself does not find his merit acknowledged; he who is self-conceited has no superiority allowed to him.<sup>19</sup>

The man who stresses something clings to the particulars of his life, at the expense of losing its general merit, which is the detachment of higher insight. Tao remains undefined. It is said to be undefinable. Yet the whole *Tao te King* describes tao going on, and there is nothing static about it. Tao in this sense might almost be

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

said to be not only an insight into being, but being itself, the proper functioning of higher things.

It sounds very much like a moral perpetual motion machine, and, in some aspects, it is. Tao is highly realistic, as Chinese philosophy usually is, for it recognizes that earthly conduct and spiritual conduct, though the former may derive from the latter, are yet different, a truth seldom realized in theologies as being a matter of phenomenal, rather than moral, weight. Though in practice everybody separates the two, in theory there are few systems of thought that realize that ideal and practical conduct should not be, because they cannot be, the same. Refusal to realize this divergence has produced fanatical puritanism on the one hand, and self-indulgence on the other.

In section thirty-six of the *Tao-te-King* we may read:

. . . when he is going to weaken another, he will first strengthen him; when he is going to overthrow another, he will first have raised him up; when he is going to despoil another, he will first have made gifts to him:—this is called 'Hiding the light (of his procedure).'

The soft overcomes the hard; and the weak the strong.<sup>20</sup>

This idea is of interest because it forms the basis of jujitsu, or judo, the Japanese art of self-defense. The defense consists of yielding to the opponent and directing his own strength against him, so that he will defeat himself by his own strength. It is also the basis of Chinese and Japanese strategy, which allows the enemy to expand so far into one's own lines, that he over-extends himself and collapses for want of supplies.

For it is untrue, as is often believed, and as loose translations of the *Tao te King* would have it, that Taoism advocates anything resembling the Golden Rule of Christianity. For the Golden Rule is an absolute and mandatory moral precept. Whereas Taoism suggests, at most, that action should be modified by a due consideration of the opponent's conduct and motives, and ameliorated by delay.

In this belief Lao Tse differs greatly from Confucius, and also from Jesus.

In the last entry of the *Tao te King* Lao Tse pokes fun at himself. After three days of writing, when he presents his written wisdom to the frontier official so that he may be permitted to leave China, what can he say but:

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

Sincere words are not fine; fine words are not sincere. Those who are skilled (*in the Tao*) do not dispute (*about it*); the disputations are not skilled in it. Those who know (*the Tao*) are not extensively learned; the extensively learned do not know it.<sup>21</sup>

So Lao Tse laughs and mocks like the elderly Taoist scholar north of Hong Kong, for when one talks of profound matters, by talking one only makes them the more elusive. Such is the wisdom of Lao Tse, which deduced a moral system from an insight into the ineffable, only to have that doctrine decline, with the passage of time, into a system of magic and oracles.

Lao Tse had one disciple of paramount importance, Chuang Tzu, who lived in the fourth and third centuries B.C. He directly opposed the more wordly attitude of Confucianism, and is as important in the history of Taoism as St. Paul was in the history of the Christian church. "Points that the Yellow Emperor doubted, how should Confucius know?" he said, and much of his work is devoted to refuting Confucius as thoroughly as Confucius repudiated tao, to which he in turn referred as "wild words." Chuang Tzu was a skilful philosopher, a considerable dialectician, and a writer:

of great and seductive charm. He devoted himself in part to explicating and expounding the extremely succinct and terse Taoist text.

"The true sage," he said, "keeps his knowledge within him, while men in general set forth theirs in argument, in order to convince each other. And therefore it is said that in argument he does not manifest himself.

Perfect TAO does not declare itself. Nor does perfect argument express itself in words. Nor does perfect charity show itself in act. Nor is perfect honesty absolutely incorruptible. Nor is perfect courage absolutely unyielding.

.....  
Who knows the argument which can be argued without words?—the TAO which does not declare itself as TAO? He who knows this may be said to be of God. To be able to pour in without making full, and pour out without making empty, in ignorance of the power by which such results are accomplished,—this is accounted Light."<sup>22</sup>

Chuang Tzu was a somewhat ironic philosopher, but this is as close as pure Taoism ever comes to a definition of God, or the Being of Being.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>22</sup> Herbert A. Giles, trans., *Chuang Tzu, Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1889), p. 25.



## II. CONFUCIANISM

IF LAO TSE IS ONE GREAT PHILOSOPHIC FOUNTAINHEAD OF THE Chinese, then Kung Tse, or Confucius, is the other. The system that derives from the latter is usually referred to as Confucianism in the Occident. In order to understand his doctrine, we have to remember the two major roots of all religions and metaphysical systemization: nature worship and ancestor worship. Nature worship is the basis of Lao Tse's system of tao. It is filial piety, the emphasis upon living up to a great past and of giving honor to one's ancestors, that is the foundation of Kung Tse's thought.

Ancestor worship is as old as nature worship; as old, indeed, as any recorded thought of Mankind. In practically all primitive societies we see ancestor worship evident in rituals in which the living are buried with the dead, either in fact or effigy, in order that the dead may lack for nothing in the other world. This practice was as common in China and Japan as in any other country. Probably the history of their art had its origins at the point where living burial was replaced by such tokens as sculpture, dolls, small figures of the living carved from bones, stone, and clay. During the Han dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 220), which marks the creation of the entity we know as China out of a series of primitive feuding states, complete sets of tomb figures were provided, including groups of magicians. As late as the Tang dynasty (618-906 A.D.), which was China's golden age, they were still being provided. As time went on, such effigies were replaced by paper money burnt as a sacrifice or buried with the dead, and as sophistication increased, the implements formerly interred with the dead were transformed into memorial stones and inscriptions that, incidentally, were chiefly devised to prevent the dead from returning to the world of the living. For in

primitive times man believed that almost immediately after death the dead became haunting and predaceous spirits. Everything was done to prevent the return of such spirits, from tying the legs of the corpse with rope, to weighing down the grave with rocks. Marie Bonaparte, the niece of Napoleon III, who is a psychoanalyst, has written an article called *La Mort et les Fleurs*, in which she points out that in our day such heavily weighted gravestones have been replaced by flowers, to the same purpose; that the throwing of a handful of earth on the coffin after it has been lowered into the pit represents the same purpose; and that such efforts are an over-compensation for the guilt we feel when someone has died. The mortuary monuments and commemorative rites are testimony to the extent of our love because we feel guilty that such affection could not save the dead from dying. Nor is this the only explanation, for all the emotions are ambivalent. Love and hate are emotions flowing different ways in the same channel, and apt to reverse direction as the balance of the relationship may direct.

It is our habit to pay large sums for wreaths for someone who has died; to whom we would not have given a withered carnation when he was alive. History is littered with monuments erected to the assassinated by the assassins, and the splendors of a gangster's funeral in the Prohibition Age are still remembered.

As time goes on, the custom of doing something, or paying out something, for the dead becomes replaced by a respect for the customs and habits of the deceased, which being revered, are preserved. Ancestors are no longer menacing ghosts, but a guarantee of social order, the continuity of tradition, and the establishment of right conduct. What was good enough for my grandfather is good enough for me, in other words: that would be a typically Confucian statement. Kung Tse based most of his philosophy on such an attempt to live up to the great achievements of the past that, it must be admitted, in his day were so far in the past as to have assumed a mythic character.

The traditional dates assigned to Confucius are 551-479 B.C. His was not a particularly happy period. It is reported that as a child he liked to play at making sacrificial offerings and at performing ceremonies. He was the descendant of a noble house, but his own family was both poor and of the commonalty, the noble forebear being thirteen generations removed. He became a bureaucrat, and at the

age of fifty he began to rise in the governmental hierarchy, becoming chief adviser to Duke Ting of Lu. His chief method of governing was shaming the opposition into defeat by an exhibition of correct conduct, a procedure that is a cornerstone of Confucian ethics, and that in fact worked very well. When his master, the Duke of Ting, fell from rectitude himself, Confucius left the state and wandered for five years, from court to court, staying now here, now there, giving both political and military advice. His wanderings were protracted beyond the five-year period, but he made many disciples, and these in turn began to filter into the governments of the various feudal states, particularly that of Wei. After fourteen years of wandering he returned to Lu in 484 B.C. He was not returned to power, but his position as an elder statesman was an honorable one and not without influence. He became an even more celebrated teacher, having in all, so it is said, some 3,000 pupils. He died in 479 B.C.

In outline his does not seem to be an especially religious life. TseKung, one of his disciples, said "The Master taught us literature and scholarship, this we can learn from him. What we cannot learn from him or what he did not teach us was what he thought about Nature and the ways of Nature (or Heaven)." He was more concerned with ritual and ceremony than with insight, but in religion, as in everything else, he felt that a differential and correct attitude would result in a correct and differential religious feeling. He was what we would call a Deist. He was also a conservative and a bureaucrat. "As to being a Divine Sage, or even a Good Man, far be it from me to make any such claim" he said in the *Analects*. "A Divine Sage I cannot hope ever to meet, the most I can hope for is to meet a true gentleman."

Confucius was roughly contemporary with the Buddha, but as Maurice Collis points out in his book *The First Holy One*, whereas the Buddha's first concern was to get out of the ruling class, Confucius' chief concern was to get in it. Nor did the two systems have equal fortunes.

The China into which Confucius was born was not the China we know now. The Chou dynasty had been in power for 600 years, and was to persist until 253 B.C., but this power was shadowy. China was a country twice the size of California, subdivided into feudal states of various degrees of power and extent engaging in petty

wars. In the center of the country the Emperor lived in the small and virtually impotent state of Chou. Socially and religiously he had much power, but politically he had none. The government was not yet in the hands of a scholarly class raised to office by examination. Wars were frequent and devastating. The intellectual classes were in search of some regulatory device. They spent much of their time in futile debate. On the whole these classes had two possible choices of attitude. Followers of Lao Tse, they could turn their back upon government and concentrate on personal virtues. The Taoist was an individual, a separate man, something of an eccentric, whatever he was he was and preferred to be *hors de société*. His attitude toward the government was one of passive non-acceptance, and he indulged in ritual magic. The other choice would require that they try to forge some sort of controlling instrument by imposing a rigid formalism upon contemporary life. Confucius represented this trend to formalism. He laid down the rules, regulations, and procedures for a functioning bureaucratic state. The real problem, however, was to wrest the power away from the contending nobles and feudatories and recentralize the government. The government had been centralized under the first Chou emperor Wei, and it was from him and his period that Confucius took his precedent.

Confucianism found itself in opposition to the realists, or those who followed the Machiavellian principles best summed up in the person of Yang, chief minister to the Chin state, which eventually overcame all its neighbors and ruled China from 221 to 206 B.C. The Chin wished to establish themselves as the only great rulers of China, and they also wished to defeat the Confucian elements in the government that were opposed to them. Confucianism was an intellectual literary movement based strongly upon precedent. The Chin could not destroy all the Confucians, but they could destroy all the precedent. Therefore, all the ancient literature and records were ordered destroyed; possession or study of the ancient texts was made punishable by death, and for want of the precedents that nourished their system, the Confucians withered away. Or rather, they would have withered away, had not the Chin dynasty been abolished and overthrown in the brief period of fifteen years.

The overthrow was accomplished by the peasant who succeeded in establishing the Han dynasty and, incidentally, modern China. Confucius had not then, and never was to be, deified, but as the

illustrious father of an ethical bureaucratic system, he was still revered. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, the scholar who established the historical genre circa 100 B.C. reports that "The hall in Lu where the disciples used formerly to live was later transformed into a memorial chapel in which were placed the Master's clothes, his ceremonial hat, his lute, his carriage and copies of his books, all of which have been carefully preserved there for 350 years. They had been set in order, and partially written, by the Confucian disciple Mencius (372-290 B.C.).

The fourth Han emperor, the Emperor Wu, who ascended the throne in 141 B.C. and who reigned for more than half a century, consolidated not only the centralized power of the throne, but also the culture of the country. He officially established Confucianism as the state cult. The Confucian party was strong at court, and succeeded in having the Emperor banish all erudites from the court but the Confucians, with the result that the Confucian books were the only ones studied. In 124 B.C. a university was founded, and the graduates of the university were the only ones appointed to government office, with the exception of a few favorites and non-Confucians in the provinces. As these appointed graduates rose in the hierarchy and became senior officials, their grip upon the government became firmer, and so it was to remain until the fall of the Han dynasty. Having identified itself with Chinese civilization, by excluding all other instruction, Confucianism became synonymous with the civilization, and could not be destroyed until the civilization was destroyed. The Emperor Wu himself, however, was completely devoted to necromancy, and spent most of his time attempting to induce Heaven to vouchsafe him a message. (Heaven, said Mencius, does not speak.) He was eager to procure personal immortality, so we may gather that the primitive magical practices of China continued unabated, even in court circles. The reign of the Emperor Wu produced two court scandals involving the magicians, one of them a court revolution begun by mistake, and by the end of the reign the magicians were more or less discredited. The Emperor, despite these foibles, was an extremely able and astute ruler, and Confucianism flourished. It was the orthodox Confucian view of the frontier problem, now the most dangerous military problem in the empire, that if the Emperor's virtue were sufficient, there would be no problem, because the barbarians would come and submit volun-

tarily. Virtue, however, is compounded with prudence, and prudence with military might. The virtue of Confucianism was the virtue of the party in power. It is the ethical system of the status quo. When the Han dynasty fell from power, it largely lost its appeal.

The Han dynasty fell in 220 A.D. Between 220 A.D. and the establishment of the Tang dynasty in 618, no fewer than fourteen dynasties sought to rule the country, and with the occasional exception of the Southern Empire, particularly under Liang Wu Ti, who reigned at the beginning of the 6th century, the scene was one of confusion, insurrection, poverty, want, mass flight, and temporary power. The situation, though not so drastic or insecure, was much like that of Europe between the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the modern states. In such circumstances conservatism was not apt to be a popular creed, and the populace was anxious to discover a savior and a salvationist faith. Buddhism, which had first been introduced into China A.D. 65, had varying fortunes under various emperors, but made converts en masse. The Emperor Liang Wu Ti (reigned A.D. 502 to 549) was himself converted to Buddhism and built monasteries and schools in the capital. Unfortunately he was not a competent ruler. However, during the 6th century more than 2,257 Buddhist works were published in China. The climax of Buddhist power was reached in 601. The Sui Emperor Wen, who somewhat precariously unified China once more from 581 to 618 A.D., took a census of the proportion of Buddhists to members of other faiths in the Kingdom. He was informed that all the population was Buddhist, and therefore he closed all the Confucian schools, with the exception of the Imperial Academy, whose seventy members were required to compile the court annals.

Confucianism seemed extinguished. However under the first Tang Emperor the situation was reversed. "Wu Ti," he is reported to have said, referring to the saintly Liang Emperor who was converted to Buddhism, "preached Buddhism so successfully to his officers that they were unable to mount their horses to defend him against the rebels." He restored the Confucian system in its entirety. He was the Son of Heaven, the representative of the unknown (and unknowable) God to whom the altar of heaven was built, and he wished to see restored the official ceremonial that both recognized and reinforced his position. At the same time this was the official



religion, although all other faiths were tolerated, on certain conditions.

China maintained a considerable trade with the erstwhile Greek kingdoms north of India, and through them, with the West. In 685 the Nestorian Christian Ruben, transliterated Alopen by the Chinese, arrived at the capital and petitioned to found a diocese. The petition was granted in the following terms: "Countries have their own religions as they have their own sages to expound them. Alopen, evidently a priest of good character, has brought images and books from the Roman domain. We have found on examination that his doctrines are pacific and have a very creditable perspicuity in respect to the moral principles they inculcate, being logical and without vagueness. There is no objection to Alopen propagating them here. The Office of Works will build in the I-ning ward a monastery large enough to house twenty-one inmates." Under terms similar to those applied to Christianity, Buddhism was now tolerated. As the official creed of the intellectuals, the upper classes, the Emperor and the government, Confucianism was permanently established, almost a thousand years after its first enunciation, as the official religion of the state. This state was to remain in power regardless of the specific dynasty even under the Ming dynasty, a foreign one. Confucianism and its identification with the government persisted until the fall of the Empire in 1912. In 843 the Emperor Wu Tsung dissolved the Buddhist, Christian, and Manichaeian religious houses in the Empire. Buddhism, at least among the upper and intellectual classes, did not become fashionable again until the reign of the Sung dynasty. Confucianism had long since crystallized into a form of worship, with a ritual, priests, temples, and ceremonials.

If we regard them as a corpus of religious texts, the Confucian documents are, to put it mildly, somewhat confusing. They consist of the *Five Classics* and the *Four Books*, plus commentaries. The *Five Classics* comprise:

The *Shi-King*, or *Book of Songs*, 305 songs and sacred anthems, plus six with titles and music, but no text, edited by Confucius, but dating from an earlier period.

The *Shu-King*, or *Book of History*, the oldest of the classics, a series of royal edicts and other documents.

The *Book of Changes*, or *Li Ching*, which we have already discussed.

The *Ch'un ch'iu*, or *Spring and Autumn Book*, a sparse chronicle of historical events written by Confucius in an effort to systemize terminology, with three commentaries.

The *Li-Ki*, or *Book of Rites*, is supposed to represent the governmental system of the early Chou dynasty, which Confucius took as the epitome of right conduct.

The *Four Books* consist of:

Two books from the *Li-Ki*, a miscellaneous assortment of ancient records, the sayings of Confucius' disciples, and other commentary.

The *Lun yü*, or *Analects*, an anthology of the dicta of Confucius, some of them probably written by Mencius.

The works of Mencius, the Confucian disciple.

All these works are primarily concerned with correct behavior, political strategy, moral precepts, and correct ritual. For example the *Li-Ki* covers such subjects as education, music, and an elucidation of Central Harmony, but a great deal of it is taken up with a meticulous description of the proper procedure at funerals. The *Li-Ki* lectures us upon the meaning of sacrifice:

Of all the methods for the good ordering of men, there is none more urgent than the use of ceremonies. Ceremonies are of five kinds, and there is none of them more important than sacrifices.

Sacrifice is not a thing coming to a man from without; it issues from within him, and has its birth in his heart. When the heart is deeply moved, expression is given to it by ceremonies; and hence, only men of ability and virtue can give complete exhibition of the ideas of sacrifice. . . .

It is only the able and virtuous man who can attain to this perfection; and can sacrifice when he has attained to it. Hence in the sacrifices of such a man he brings into exercise all sincerity and good faith, with all right-heartedness and reverence; he offers the proper things; accompanies them with proper rites; employs the soothing of music; does everything suitably to the season. Thus intelligently does he offer his sacrifices, without seeking for anything to be gained by them:—such is the heart and mind of a filial son.<sup>1</sup>

But the *Li-Ki* also deals with such mundane matters as a recipe for soup, together with the proper etiquette for eating it.

<sup>1</sup> James Legge, trans., *Sacred Books of China, Texts of Confucianism, The Sacred Books of the East*.

In the *Shih King*, the collection of ancient odes, we may read:  
 What you teach  
 The people all imitate.<sup>2</sup>

And since right conduct is the ideal, right conduct must pervade and animate all the strata and all the acts of life.

When Confucius was asked what he would do if he became Minister of the largest of the rival states of China, as his ambition led him to hope he would, he immediately answered:

What is necessary is to rectify names. . . . If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success.

When affairs cannot be carried on to success, proprieties and music will not flourish. When proprieties and music do not flourish, punishments will not be properly awarded. When punishments are not properly awarded, the people do not know how to move hand or foot.

Therefore a superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect.<sup>3</sup>

In this statement we find one of the essences of his doctrine, a pedantic dwelling upon the letter of the law, a fulfillment of the precise prescriptions of the moral and social order. For if any part of the social order is changed, then the whole changes, and the proper functioning of the whole must be maintained at all times. In a way, one might say that from a psychological viewpoint, Confucius was a ritualist. A ritualist in this sense is a man who, for instance, when he undresses to go to bed, cannot get to sleep unless his clothes are arranged on a chair in a certain order, or he has counted all the roses in the wallpaper. This is called psychasthenia. Confucius displayed many such traits. There are times when we almost feel that a moral man, according to the Confucian ideal, must be an actor:

Confucius, in his village, looked simple and sincere, and as if he were not able to speak.

When he was in the prince's ancestral temple, or in the court, he spoke minutely on every point, but cautiously.

When he was waiting at court, in speaking with the great officers of the lower grade, he spoke freely, but in a straightforward manner; in

<sup>2</sup> *Sacred Books of China*, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

speaking with those of the higher grade, he did so blandly, but precisely.

When the ruler was present, his manner displayed respectful uneasiness; it was grave, but self-possessed.

When the prince called him to employ him in the reception of a visitor, his countenance appeared to change, and his legs to move forward with difficulty.

He inclined himself to the other officers among whom he stood, moving his left or right arm, as their position required, but keeping the skirts of his robe before and behind evenly adjusted.

He hastened forward, with his arms like the wings of a bird.

When the guest had retired, he would report to the prince, "The visitor is not turning round any more."

When he entered the palace gate, he seemed to bend his body, as if it were not sufficient to admit him.

When he was standing, he did not occupy the middle of the gateway; when he passed in or out, he did not tread upon the threshold.

When he was passing the vacant place of the prince, his countenance appeared to change, and his legs to bend under him, and his words came as if he hardly had breath to utter them.

He ascended the reception hall, holding up his robe with both his hands, and his body bent; holding in his breath also, as if he dared not breathe.

When he came out from the audience, as soon as he had descended one step, he began to relax his countenance, and had a satisfied look. When he had got to the bottom of the steps, he advanced rapidly to his place, with his arms like wings, and on occupying it, his manner still showed respectful uneasiness.

When he was carrying the sceptre of his ruler, he seemed to bend his body, as if he were not able to bear its weight. He did not hold it higher than the position of the hands in making a bow, nor lower than their position in giving anything to another. His countenance seemed to change, and look apprehensive, and he dragged his feet along as if they were held by something to the ground.

In presenting the presents with which he was charged, he wore a placid appearance.

At his private audience, he looked highly pleased.

The stable being burned down, when he was at court, on his return he said, "Has any man been hurt?" He did not ask about the horses.

When any of his friends died, if he had no relations who could be depended on for the necessary offices, he would say, "I will bury him."

When he saw any one in a mourning dress, though it might be an acquaintance, he would change countenance; when he saw any one wearing the cap of full dress, or a blind person, though he might be in his undress, he would salute them in a ceremonious manner.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1893), pp. 227-35.

This conduct is not stage acting, however. It is acting to live up exactly to the expectations of the hour, and to this degree one might say that Kung Tse endeavored to achieve tao, or the perfect harmony of seasonableness. We must remember that Confucius wished to establish a system of harmonious social control. People are not merely individuals, as we discover from the findings of modern sociology. They are sometimes scarcely individuals at all. Their societal role, by channelizing their personality, makes demands upon it and sometimes modifies it. An undertaker is not supposed to be flippant. A minister is not supposed to be a football player. The Royal Palace of the Louvre contains floods of stairs with shallow risers. It is impossible to go up or down them quickly. They were designed for dignified and slow ceremonials. The servants' stairs concealed in the masonry, however, have extremely steep risers, and shallow treads that do not encourage one to linger. The whole purpose of the Confucian system is to control the tempo of social movements by music, dance, and ceremonial, so that by behaving in a certain and correct manner from childhood, people will not be able to behave in any other way. If an angry man wishes to rebuke a colleague, but has to pass through five secretaries and lesser functionaries to reach him, it is likely that his anger will have abated by the time he gets there. If the symbols of an office are more important than the present incumbent, then the power of the office will endure and maintain itself, whether the incumbent does or not. If he knows he will be dismissed for transgressing his authority, or what is worse, laughed at, he will not transgress his authority. If it takes 360 steps to reach an altar, rather than 10, the approach will be more arduous, and give longer time for reflection, and therefore he who approaches it is more apt to be in a correct frame of mind than if he had merely to enter the room next door. The etiquette of Versailles was designed to keep the nobles in order, to enhance the power of the king, and to give the members of the court something to do. The etiquette of Confucius, though originally perhaps designed to enhance the prestige of the Emperor at the expense of the vassal, was much more concerned with assuring the proper functioning of the machinery of government. In order to accomplish this purpose the characters of those holding office had to be subtly changed. By enhancing the ritual, the role, and the ceremonial, he augmented the durability of the society, and also its moral content,

by diminishing the importance of the ego of the officeholder. Thus, in later times, when Confucianism was well established, it did not matter much who the Emperor was or what he was like. That there was an Emperor was all-important. In order to accomplish the efficient working of such a system, which involved the regulation of the character of an entire people, it was necessary that everything be planned, from the proper emotions in a given situation, down to the cut of a robe and the correct number of steps up to a hall of audience. It is not difficult to see why music occupied a central position in such a scheme. Even in our own day nobody plays a waltz at military review, or a march at a summer dance, nor are drums employed as the musical background to an innocent lovesong. And if a waltz were played at a military review, nobody would waltz to it, but would pretend to ignore it. This conformity is exactly what Confucius wished to ensure, and he succeeded in doing so.

The central tenet of Confucianism is much like tao: the maintenance of an appropriate and correct conduct under all circumstances, without excess, but also without too little exertion. How, then, does Confucianism differ from Taoism? The difference is chiefly a matter of emphasis, a consideration of how tao may be best achieved. There has never been a Chinese philosopher who abolished tao from his considerations: in one way or another all Chinese systems strive towards it. Lao Tse would have us conform to tao by yielding, or *wu-wei*, by giving in to circumstances. Kung Tse would say that one follows tao by strong and decided action, by doing vigorously the things that the circumstances demand. Rather than achieve tao by giving in to circumstances, he would achieve it by adjusting the circumstances to tao. One might almost say that Kung Tse preferred the yang quality, the masculine outgoingness or extroverted attitude of action; and Lao Tse the yin, or contracting, female, dark, and invisible way. One might also say that Kung Tse, a bureaucrat, was more interested in saving a society, and that Lao Tse, a philosopher, was more interested in the salvation of the self.

Kung Tse sometimes gives us insights into himself, more often than does Lao Tse. Confucius will say, "Men who are wiser, more learned, and more virtuous than I, you might find in every one of the villages of China, but a man who is more eager to study you won't find anywhere in the world." "At fifteen I had my mind bent



on learning. At thirty I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the decrees of heaven. At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right."

We see that he was most proud of his ability to learn and his zeal for study. Kung Tse's educational method is carefulness. He perceives that one cannot teach everybody everything, and that a wise man ought not to waste his time with a fool:

Tsai Wo asked, saying, "A benevolent man, though it be told him—'There is a man in a well,' will go in after him, I suppose." Confucius said, "Why should he do so? A superior man may be made to go to the well, but he cannot be made to go down into it. He may be imposed upon, but he cannot be befooled."<sup>5</sup>

And he added:

Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves;—this may be called the art of virtue.<sup>6</sup>

Many Christian missionaries have used this example in sermons, for they combine it with the tale of the Good Samaritan, which, translated into Chinese, uses the image of the man fallen in a well and calling for help. The missionaries point out that the Confucian would say that the man had fallen down the well because it was not properly covered, and would go to the capital to report immediately the shameful oversight. The Buddhist would say that assuredly the man would perish in the well, but since we must all perish in any event at our allotted time, it is better to face that death than to strive futilely after pleasure. So the Buddhist would preach the man a sermon on nirvana. But the Christian, say the missionaries, will immediately look for a rope and haul the man out. Thus the missionary draws a contrast between the three faiths, and on the whole it is quite an accurate one. The Confucian would consider it more worthwhile to regulate the government's oversight, so that the accident could not occur again, than to deal with the immediate example of incorrect behavior both on the part of the government and of the man, realizing that he could probably not do much

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 192-93.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

for the man anyway. Thus the virtue preached by Kung Tse is quite different from the brotherly love advocated by Christian teaching.

Confucius calls his virtue jen, which is written: 仁 and is a sign combining the signs of man and two. Virtue is thus the condition people should be in when there are a number of them together, a social rather than a personal matter. We can see that in the teachings of Kung Tse, jen, or charity, is calmer, more neutral, more reluctant, and more free from the sentiment that inheres in Christian caritas. The wife of Alfred North Whitehead reports a vicar at Cambridge who concluded his sermon with the words, "Finally, my brethren, for well-conducted people life presents no problems."<sup>7</sup> Such is the general drift of the teachings of Kung Tse.

Kung Tse was asked, "Should one, as Lao Tse has said, love one's enemy, those who do us harm?" And Kung Tse replied, "By no means. Answer hatred with justice and love with benevolence. Otherwise you would waste your benevolence." It would not be just to show the same reaction of charity and love to a man who hates you as you would to one who loves you. "Answer hatred with justice": in other words there should be no hasty actions and everything should be completely suitable to the time.

Confucianism is in essence an aristocratic or upper-middle-class faith; and indeed, of all the living religions, only Christianity did not have an aristocratic origin. If we give any reason for this distinction, we may say that the aristocratic temper is on the whole a detached one, and any contemplation of the ineffable demands as a prime condition considerable detachment on the part of the person who does the meditating. We have said that, in identifying itself with Chinese civilization through a complete control of the educational system, Confucianism would endure exactly as long as that civilization lasted. Of Confucianism as a system of court and bureaucratic ethics, this statement holds true. In its bureaucratic form, it collapsed when the court collapsed in 1912. As a system of discipline and mental outlook, applicable in any way to government, or as a state religion, it did not survive the lifespan of those who had

<sup>7</sup> Lucien Price, ed., *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1954), p. 339.

completed their education before 1912. But as a religion and organized cult it survives as strongly as ever. Whether Lao Tse or Kung Tse might in themselves be considered as religious leaders, is debatable. In the case of Lao Tse, we might say that he was as far above religion as Kung Tse was below it. Lao Tse, in general, practiced the branch of metaphysics that is totally divorced from the apparent or phenomenal world; Kung Tse adopted the branch that is intimately concerned with the phenomenal world.

Chi Lu asked about serving *the spirits of the dead*. The Master said, "While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve *their spirits*?" Chi Lu added, "I venture to ask about death." He was answered, "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?" \*

When his students asked him if they should offer sacrifices and ceremonies to the great deities of Chinese tradition, such as Shang Ti, the personified heaven, and to the various local deities of mountain and river, Kung Tse counselled them to do so, and to follow the pattern of the past exactly. On the other hand, they should attend to such rites no more than necessary from a social point of view. He is more concerned with the social than with the revelatory aspects of faith. In Protestant countries, where there is a definite link between the faith one professes and the socio-economic group to which one belongs, we see something of the same principle at work. To this extent one might say that Kung Tse was beneath religion. His conception of tao, in the religious sense, was of something so abstract and lofty that it did not belong to the world of the things that were his concern. This was a most Deistic view, or at any rate, our 18th century Deists had the Western equivalent of such an outlook. He avoided discussing tao, in quite a different way than did Lao Tse and his followers. We may understand now why Chinese Buddhism was more inclined to speak the language of Taoism, which deals with the ineffable, than that of Confucianism, which deals largely with a particular and specific conformity to outward forms. It would not be quite just to say that Confucianism has no metaphysics; but it is almost truthful to say that it has no metaphysics of its own, but derives them from the ancient Chinese tradition that is more clearly expressed in Taoism than in any Confucianist text. The Chinese Buddhist monks employed the expressions of the *Tao*

\* *The Chinese Classics*, pp. 240-41.

*te King*, the *wu-wei* and other concepts, to express the ideas of the Buddha. Out of the many sects that they created, one of the most enduring has been what is called in China *Ch'an*, and in Japan, *Zen* Buddhism, both of which are phonetic renderings of the Sanskrit Yoga expression "dhyana," or meditation.

## I2.

# ZEN BUDDHISM

CHINA IS A VERY OLD COUNTRY, WITH A CONTINUOUS TRADITION that for its length is only paralleled by that of ancient Egypt. Its culture has persisted for some 4,000 years, and for at least 2,500 of those years it has been a sophisticated civilization. Japan is a very recent country. Legend ascribes the 6th century B.C. as the date of its first Emperor; archaeology advances the date to the beginning of the Christian era. Both Japanese religion and Japanese culture remained those of a primitive state until the 6th century A.D. By and large China developed its own culture. Japan borrowed most of its chief cultural elements, but adapted the borrowings to its own needs, requirements, and aptitudes. Buddhism reached Japan from Korea, in the course of the endless wars the Japanese fought with that country, or countries, in the middle of the 6th century A.D. In the next century the Japanese sent embassies to China to bring back the doctrine direct. The introduction of Buddhism into Japan by way of Korea and China, and the rise of Japan as a unified country, with a court strong enough to unify national cultural life, are almost exactly parallel in time.

Ch'an Buddhism is better known under its Japanese name of Zen because in recent decades a great Japanese scholar, Dr. D. T. Suzuki, has rendered the Zen heritage into a multi-volume English translation. In addition Alan Watts has ventured to interpret Suzuki's renderings of Chinese-Japanese Buddhism in the light of modern psychological and psychoanalytical terms. It was possible for the great far-eastern scholar, James Bissett Pratt to state, in a recent review of a volume of Suzuki's books on Zen, "There are today two classes of educated people in America, those who have read Suzuki's books

on Zen Buddhism and those who have not." He meant that anyone who has come under the strong influence of Suzuki, and through him, of Zen Buddhist ideas, somehow becomes a different man with a changed outlook on life, an outlook that shows in his actions.

Since Zen Buddhism has become so widely known, we must inquire into the great new idea that it contributes to the history of religion and, specifically, to the history of Buddhism.

Zen is a realization of the ultimate, or Being of Being, which yet contrives to give that realization and that Ultimate no concrete statement. This freedom from exact definition explains its vitality, for it endeavors to keep alive the act of insight by refusing to allow that act to be debased into outward forms of ritual and religious cult. Instead of developing methods of stating the ineffable Being of Being, and of defining its nature and so limiting or even losing sight of it, Zen concentrates on keeping alive and developing the various means that make insight possible.

Zen Buddhism might be called a religion of no religion,<sup>1</sup> a religion in which the form of the faith is deliberately sacrificed to its content or goal; the exact opposite, in other words, of the development of most creeds. To this purpose Zen develops what might be called an anti-intellectualism, for it attempts to steer clear of all intellectual and confining concepts. In this respect it is true Buddhism, almost Gotamism, the original doctrine of the Buddha. Of this faithfulness to the word of the Buddha, Zen Buddhists are keenly aware, so they sometimes trace its heritage back to some supposed ancient sutra lost in the dawn of Buddhist history. In this sutra we read that the Buddha joined a large assembly of monks, but instead of addressing them, he merely sat in line with them, saying nothing, until after a long wait the god Brahma handed him a lotus flower, which the Buddha accepted and held up for the monks to behold. Nobody understood but the monk Maha Kassapa, who sat next to him, and who smiled. Since he showed by this wordless smile that he understood, the Buddha gave the lotus flower to him, thereby appointing him his successor. We can observe a similar parable in the Zen pictorial motif of the scroll-tearing monk.

Thus the Zen Buddhist community traces its lineage back through something like an apostolic succession.

<sup>1</sup> See Frederic Spiegelberg, *The Religion of No Religion* (Stanford, California: James Ladd Delkin, 1948).



Since the Buddha said nothing when he held up the lotus, it would be both awkward and impious for us to venture to interpret his silence. Perhaps he wished to convey the message of existentialism, that the here and now, which has no conceptual expression, is of greatest importance to Man, in containing the ultimate reality and the ultimate miracle. What we can say is that the Zen monks have maintained an anti-intellectual approach throughout the cen-



PLATE NINE

Zen Monk tearing Buddhist scripture. After a painting by Liang-Kai.

turies. This approach is often carried to extremes. If a proselyte comes to a Zen master with a momentous question, the Zen master is likely to punch him in the nose, throw him out the window, or resort to other acts of violence, designed to force the proselyte to enlightenment by pushing him vigorously away from the traps of intellectualization and conceptual thinking and confronting him with a brutal reality. If you ask one of the Zen masters a question that you consider important to religious effort, he attempts to frighten you out of such sophistry by uttering the vatsu, or lion's roar.

We have observed this principle of conscious cruelty among the gurus and teachers of India; in Buddhism it finds its extreme in the

Bodhidharma

十



PLATE TEN

The highly venerated Bodhidharma, the first known Buddhist missionary to China, shown crossing the waters on a slender bamboo branch. The miracle of crossing water dryfooted, and the related phenomenon of levitation, have been independently voiced by practically all the great religions and attributed to their leaders. It is a powerful archetypal symbol, cherished by all traditions. The print is Japanese.

practice of the Zen masters. From another viewpoint, insofar as it is designed to save the pupil from false thinking, it might be regarded as kindness or charity.

According to legend, and perhaps to history, Ch'an or Zen Buddhism was brought to China by Bodhidharma around 520 A.D. The source for his history is the *Records of the Transmission of the Lamp* by Tao Yuan, compiled in 1004 A.D. There it is stated that Bodhidharma was the 28th patriarch of Indian Buddhism, or of an Indian Buddhist sect. He was reputedly the son of a petty rajah of South India. There are, however, no records of him in India, and since he is supposed to have lived to the age of 150 years, his life is at least partly fabulous. He entered China by way of Canton, and died there after a mission of nine years, passing on the succession to a pupil. In China he had great success among the elite of the literati, and Ch'an Buddhism made its first appeal among the upper classes. His immediate successor attempted to take it to the people.

It is reported that Bodhidharma, a name that means "awakened to the law," had an interview with one of the Chinese Emperors called Wu Ti, who asked him how to attain nirvana. Probably he used the word tao. Bodhidharma shrugged his shoulders, saying, "If you try to obtain it, you will get farther away from it." The Emperor then asked where it was located. Bodhidharma replied that it was located in our everyday thoughts." This sort of abrupt, curt, often rude, and somewhat snobbish answer is typical of Zen methods. The Zen master will try to brush away your intellectual problems by saying, "Go have a cup of tea." He tries to bring you down to something tangible and immediate that will dispel the theological dogma clouding direct insight.

Bodhidharma left no writings behind, nor did the second Chinese Patriarch. He did found Ch'an or Zen in China, however. At the end of the 7th century Ch'an Buddhism split into two sects as a result of a contested election to the patriarchate. The northern school of Zen was headed by Shen Hsiu, a Confucian, who believed that enlightenment should come slowly, temperately, and gradually. He left no successors, and when he died in 706 A.D. the school died with him. The southern school was headed by the Patriarch Hui Neng, who, according to tradition, was an illiterate carpenter adopted by his predecessor in the patriarchate. He lived from 637 to 713, and

was patriarch from 675. The southern school believed in sudden or abrupt enlightenment. The southern school won out, and it was this school that inspired most Tang and Sung Buddhist art in China. Hui Neng is credited with having firmly established the basic rules of Zen for China.

These rules, or rather characteristics of the complete adjustment of Zen to Chinese cultural values, consisted of:

1. The substitution of concrete imagery for the abstraction of Indian texts. A follower of Hui Neng, for instance, instead of saying "You are Buddha," would say, "Behold your face before it was born."

2. The use of meditation, introduced by Bodhidharma, of whom it is said that he spent his nine years in China facing a wall, as a means to an end, rather than as something of value in itself; the end being sudden enlightenment.

3. The use of sudden, abrupt, and violent pedagogical methods, such as throwing the pupil out the window to bring about enlightenment.

There is a good deal of shrewdly-calculated humor involved in the abruptness of Zen. This humor sometimes takes unexpected forms. The Japanese, for example, see no irreverence in portraying the state of dharma in the form of a child's toy weighted at the bottom, and with the face of Bodhidharma; the theory being that anyone who has achieved enlightenment cannot possibly be tipped over, even by laughter, derision, or playfulness. Such an attitude is a sign of maturity, since we can joke freely only about the things we are sure of.

One of the customs of Zen was that the retiring abbot of a monastery had to appoint his successor, since insight was passed from heart to heart. It was the rule that he had to appoint his ablest antagonist, who in turn would have to appoint his own ablest antagonist, so that divergent opinions, swinging like a pendulum, would keep the order in movement without altering its nature. In order to choose the ablest antagonist, an examination was once held in the monastery courtyard. Everyone had to write down a poem about the tree of life. By the end of the week the whole inner wall of the patio was lined with such poems; and the monks circulated about the walls, reading the poems, until they agreed, by the end of the week, on which was best. The calligraphy of the best one was superb. It read, "The tree of life has its roots deep in the past; it

spreads its branches into the future; and the fruits, grown by the juice of karma, are falling down to create new trees of life, until enlightenment does away with its eternal succession."

Next day the prizes were to be given out by the abbot, but when he came to the best poem, the monks found that during the night somebody had altered the strokes of the ideograms so that their meaning was entirely different. The poem now read: "What nonsense: as if there were such a thing as a tree of life; the past does not exist; the future does not exist. The Karma, also, by the rule of Buddha, is not carried by any juice, so why hope for the end of this; why chop down the tree; enlightenment lies in realizing the meaninglessness of this whole riddle." The man who had altered the poem was thus the ablest antagonist. When he had confessed, he was appointed the next abbot.

This is a typical Zen story.

Buddhism in China reached its heights, particularly its cultural heights, during the Tang and Sung dynasties, and has since withered away culturally. In Japan, however, despite the Shinto sects that co-exist with it, and despite the intermingling of the elements of each in each, Buddhism, and in particular Zen, is a principle that pervades the entire national life.

In the western world we have had great ethical systems, all more or less based upon the Christian theme of love for one's fellow men, yet for 2,000 years western mankind has suffered for its inability to fulfill these ideal systems. The failure to do so is rooted in the endless dualism of the West, which divides man's spirit from his body, and gives each a different government. We completely lack a universal system of human behavior, clearly worked out and applicable to all situations. The East has not been subject to the platonic error of separating the real idea from unreal matter, and sacrificing phenomenal life to the spiritual life. It has thus found it possible to make adjustments between the two, by regarding existence as a whole, rather than as a duality. To the East, the inner and outer worlds of man are complementary to each other, rather than mutually exclusive. Intentions count for little in Asia, and acts for much more. The sentence "He was a good man, because he always meant to do good, though he never succeeded in practice," would be unintelligible to an Oriental. An emphasis on ethical acts,

rather than ethical intentions, gives the Oriental systems of ethics a power we all too often find sadly lacking in our own.

Buddhism reached Japan in 552 A.D. It was not Gotamism, but a highly complex religious system, deeply colored by Korea and China, through which it had passed. Around 1300 the native Japanese, and the imported Chinese Confucian, Taoist, and in particular, Buddhist elements blended together into self-contemplating Buddhism, or Zen. Zen thus became the vitalizing and directive force of Japanese social existence, and its spirit shaped the moral attitudes and modes of living that are called Bushido. These attitudes have persisted to this day. Bushido places its emphasis upon a just, enlightened conduct towards other people.

Zen Buddhism maintains that nothing is real. The entire world, including the Buddha, Buddhist teachings, and redemption, is merely imaginary. It makes the point that existence in all its multiplicity is entirely unimportant. Everything difficult thus becomes easier to bear if we know that ultimately it is a mere imposture and illusion. A pain does not become less severe because it is considered to be an ultimate illusion, but much of the gnawing care that makes one regret departed happiness and fills one with worry about future needs is abolished in this way. The follower of Zen regards this life as we regard our dreams: or, life is a play. He must join the actors, since there is a role allotted to him, but even though he participates, like an actor, at the same time he feels like a spectator of himself and others. This view could very easily lead to the dangerous fragmenting of the human personality, schizophrenia. But the doctrine that involvement in this world is indistinguishable from the condition of salvation, and essential to it, protects the believer from such a danger. Both the audience and the actors are in the same theatre, so the believer does not convulsively try to escape from one in order to reach the other.

In the middle of life's drama, as an actor among actors, he senses at the same time the triviality of this whole existence and also feels himself removed from it. Already in possession of perfect enlightenment, he does not have to seek it in transcendental doctrines of escape. For human beings are in their essence the Buddha, just as ice is in essence water. There is no ice without water, and there would be no human beings without the Buddha. The Zen teacher Haku-in,



who lived circa 1700, wrote, "Here is nothing different from Paradise, and this earthly body is nothing different from the Buddha."<sup>2</sup>

The third Zen patriarch, Sozan, said in the 6th century: "Only he who does not know the deepest meaning of truth exerts himself vainly racking his brain. A thousand words and a thousand thoughts only separate you from the goal that much further. Regardless of all words and all pondering, you can find salvation everywhere. Only small thoughts linger and the more one tires from chasing after it, the later he attains the goal."

The great *Song of the Experience of Truth*, derived from Yoka Daishi in the 7th century, describes the person who has won through to salvation:

"Have you never seen a person who is truth itself, he who, standing above all knowledge, learning and doctrine is also elevated above all cause-effect sequences? He is completely free. He no longer seeks truth; he does not condemn error. The true nature of obscurity cannot be different from the Buddha nature. The empty dream of fancy is not different from the truth. He who realizes this truth ultimately attains perfection."<sup>3</sup>

Adaptation to the way of the world and the conquest of egoism are the two most important foundations of Bushido, which might be called Zen in practice. These two principles entered into Japanese life so completely as to color everything, including the language.

Chinese culture, reached Japan, first by way of Korea and then directly, and was soon followed by Chinese Buddhism. At that time the Japanese had no written language. They employed Chinese characters, often arbitrarily, either to stand for syllables, or for concepts and things. Chinese, however, was a highly sophisticated and complex language; Japanese a primitive one. Since the written language is the same, however, each nation can read the other's literature, and Buddhist texts were not translated into Japanese until the 19th century.

A language always expresses the standards and outlook of the people who speak it. It is therefore imperative that the reader understand the more important characteristics of the Japanese language before he studies the particulars of Bushido.

Generally applicable keys, musical forms, and melodies do not

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<sup>2</sup> Quotations adapted from Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *The Manual of Zen Buddhism* (Kyoto: The Eastern Buddhist Society, 1935), p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

exist in Japan. Each type and each system may be used only under certain clearly-defined circumstances. The same is true of their language. Before you can learn Japanese, the teacher must categorize you as a man, a married woman, or a girl; a merchant, or an employee. According to your class, the teacher will select the correct form of speech. The shopkeeper speaks a different language than that used by his customer, the master of the house has an idiom different from that of his wife, children, guests, and servants. In short Japanese has an enormous apparatus of polite forms, each of which is usable only in one type of situation. One of the chief criticisms leveled against the founder of one of the more recent Shinto sects is that she spoke of religious matters in the language of a carpenter. Such divisions go right down to the parts of speech.

In English the plural of nouns is usually formed by the addition of an "s." In Japanese the matter is not so simple. The word for child is *ko*. If I want to talk about children, the formation of the plural depends entirely upon what kind of children they are. If they are the children of my superiors, I use the plural form *gata*. If they are unknown to me and I wish to speak neutrally of them, I add *tachi*. Children related to me I call *ko-domo*. Children as a general group receive the plural ending *shu*. If I wish to say something disparaging about ill-bred lower-class children, I say *ko-ra*. If I wish to show special courtesy in mentioning children to their parents, I would speak of the *o ko san gata*. "O" is an honorific.

The wife in Japan always speaks respectfully to her husband. She may address him only as *o-mae san*. In relations of intimacy, she is allowed to use the slightly less formal *kimi*. The husband, being superior to the wife, has a wider latitude. When he wishes to show he is affectionate, he says, *ki sama*, a phrase otherwise used only with animals, beggars, and other inferior beings.

For our word you there are seven simultaneous translation possibilities into Japanese. The other pronouns are equally complex. Two different ideas are expressed by this linguistic hierarchy. One is the will of the Japanese to adapt themselves to the various conditions and relationships of life, and above all, to social conditions. The other is that all personal, selfish wishes should be replaced by seemly behavior.

Such an approach, colored by Zen, governs an extraordinarily large area of Japanese life.

There is, for example, the art of jiu-jitsu, which literally translated, means "the gentle art." Jiu-jitsu is considered by the Japanese to be an esoteric doctrine. Knowledge of the functions of human musculature and of the 107 most vital and vulnerable places in the body was acquired originally through the art of massage. The basic principle of jiu-jitsu is to hold the opponent in check until he weakens himself through a useless waste of his powers and is forced to yield. Everything the opponent does must be turned against him. These methods of insuring success through redirection of the opponent's strength rather than a dependence upon one's own are implicit in Japanese behavior. They apply equally to the physical and to the intellectual realm. Bushido advocates the gentle art of retreat even in discussion. So, when someone makes a false statement and begins to defend it, it would be stupid of us to state a contrary opinion and attack him. Instead we ask him a few leading questions. He is thus forced to drive his inaccurate viewpoint to an extreme where even he can recognize its inaccuracy. We lead the opponent to the right view through tact.

An example may clarify this kind of mental combat. One cold winter night the old Zen priest Tanka came to a mountain hut. In order to keep warm, he built a fire. Since there was no other fuel to hand, he burned a wooden statue of the Buddha. This example seems to show us that the Zen follower feels superior to religious permission or prohibition, and that he may do something under unusual circumstances that he would ordinarily regard as a misdeed.

A man came by, saw the fire, and reproached the priest bitterly. The priest did not try to dissuade the man from his accusation of impiety. That would only have led to a fruitless discussion. Instead he said, "I am trying to liberate the essential power of Buddha from the statue by burning it. I am looking for the shari (relics) in the ashes."

The man laughed and said scornfully, "What would implant the power of the Buddha in a wooden puppet like that?" With these words he defeated himself. It was clear that according to his own opinion a statue of the Buddha deserved no special consideration, and that his anger was therefore meaningless. The priest said, "If you understand that yourself, why do you scold me?"

This example illustrates the basis of Zen pedagogy, a jiu-jitsu of the spirit. Success, however, does not depend upon a victory over the

opponent. That would hardly be in line with the altruism of Zen believers. Instead, success inheres in making the opponent work out the truth, which is found in even the most apparently meaningless statement. In this sense the opponent is not ultimately an "opponent" but a fellow human being whom we must strive to lead to the road of salvation. If we remember this attitude, we will cease to feel that the educational procedure of spiritual jiu-jitsu is hypocritical. The intention behind it is not unworthy obstinacy, but an endeavor to lead all beings back into contact with mature thinking. This good intention does not, however, moderate the procedure. It is worthwhile to lead everyone to the fullest consequences of his talents, even if those talents are self-destruction and defeat.

In the vehemence and crudity of their pedagogy, the Zen teachers are certainly unsurpassed in the world. Since Zen Buddhism does not believe in the slow, tranquil acquisition of insight, but in sudden illumination, the disciple has to be converted by force.

The Zen system is not formulated dogmatically, and the Zenists defend themselves violently against any attempt to define their manner of life in a theoretical way. Books, dogmas, and sermons are spurned. Nor is there any way of communicating Zen truths by words. But there are other pedagogical methods. The only thing that matters to the Zen teacher is changing the disciple from the dream to the waking state. Thus the teacher may suddenly fling himself upon the seated pupil, take him by the throat, beat him, and shout at him.

On the other hand, the teacher also demands that the student wrest knowledge from him by sudden force. Everything that the student does with him is in essence nothing but preparation for the "great experience," or awakening to the realization of truth. The great experience is not easy of attainment. Usually years of exercises in a monastery are necessary before the novice has become sufficiently mature for the real goal.

The preparatory exercises consist of the old Yoga exercises of India. These were important in Hinduism, in Buddhism, and are equally important in Zen. It is said that many of the Zen patriarchs died in the posture of contemplation. Bodhidharma is reputed to have sat silently with his legs crossed for nine years, until his disused and decayed lower limbs fell off.

In considering such legends, we must remember that religion does

not necessarily have to consist of a perpetual enforced seriousness. Especially in Japan, religious services are often held in a gay, light-hearted, and humorous manner.

When Yoga posture and breathing exercises have been mastered, the Zen student proceeds to the koan exercises, which are well established formulations of problems that the student must consider and solve exactly. Such a koan is called the "knocking at the door." The student is to open the door of his inner self and realize the truth that he has found in his entire being. Nor is the problem set ever an intellectual one. Thus in the morning a flag might be waving over the monastery grounds in the wind, and the abbot might say to his monks: "A koan. What is moving, the flag or the wind?" The monks meditate and may answer: "Neither, the mind is moving."

One should not try to analyze such answers, because analysis would lead us into the conceptual habit, which Zen seeks to avoid. Another koan is, "Has the dog Buddha-nature?" If you say yes, you are being disrespectful. Of course all things have Buddha-nature, being illuminated by the Being of Being, but one should not say this of a dog, for in the East the dog is the most despised of creatures. So one can say neither yes nor no, for yes is disrespectful and no is incorrect. The only acceptable answer is that of the Zen master, who when asked this question, simply barked. That is a koan.

The great experience of illumination of the spirit can occur at most diverse times. One Zen student had it in the moment when, rebuked by his teacher, he broke his leg in the excitement. Another student, who was meditating, awakened to truth when a woman hit him on the head with a broom. Whenever enlightenment occurs, or, in Japanese, *satori* or sudden enlightenment, the postulants do not speak about their experience, but instead snap their fingers. This act is supposed to give an immediate grasp of the Being of Being to all who hear the sound.

Almost always the condition of awakening is portrayed as occurring suddenly and ecstatically, in the manner of intoxication. Tears are supposed to gush from the eyes of the student, and he glistens with perspiration. This forcible reception of truth is particularly stressed by the southern, Sudden Sect, school, which is opposed in the North by the Step-by-Step School. Words are avoided in express-

ing the experience. If the Zen teacher wishes to guide someone towards awakening, he roars or screams at them and utters the inarticulate cry, *kwatsu*, which was originally a curse. In Japan this syllable has a significance similar to that of the sacred *om* sound in India. The Zen believer knows that in *kwatsu* he has merged "the three-thousand-fold world into one thought." This fear of the specific word is traced back to the Buddha himself, who certainly refused to speak of *nirvana* or its nature.

Often a Zen teacher will undertake the practice of *Shotaichoyo*. This is called "the long nourishing, or maturing, of the ancient womb," and it means a return to the purely secular life, a complete submersion in work and in the changing events of the world. Thus, for decades, many Zenists, after their awakening, went among the people, living among beggars and leading an existence of hard physical labor. Thus it was proved whether or not the truth received was of permanent value, or whether it would vanish among mundane affairs.

Sozan said, "Whoever would approach the all-oneness may not hate the dust of the world of sense. When one no longer hates it, there is nothing left but Buddha's perfect wisdom."

The influence of Zen upon both the fine and the practical arts was immense, first of all in China, and even more in Japan. We have seen that Buddhist doctrine was translated into Chinese chiefly in terms of Taoist terminology. Lao Tse compares *tao* to water, the "stage of being supremely good," because it is useful to all creatures and does not fight any. In its action upon rocks, water works in the same way as *jiujitsu*. "In all the world there is nothing more affectionate and weak than water," said Lao Tse. "Still in its manner of attacking firm and hard things there is nothing that could take its place."

This is the essential clue to the understanding of Zen as it influenced painting under the Tang and Sung in China.

Notice that in such impressions Buddhist and Taoist inspiration are henceforth closely bound together. Moreover, in the Sung period, the Buddhist schools of meditation or *Ch'an*—the Zen of the Japanese—and of Mount *T'ien-t'ai* (The Nipponese Tendai) sought, like the Taoists, a mystic communion with the essence of things, the soul of the universe, now considered identical with the soul of the Buddhas. . . . A Japanese



text borrowed from the pietist sect also expressly tells us: "Not only animals, but trees, grass, stones, the mountains themselves might become Buddhas."<sup>4</sup>

And when, in the 15th century, under the Ashikaga Dynasty, painters and scholars were bundled off to China and told not to return until they had mastered, among other things, Chinese painting, they studied not the contemporary art they found, but the Zen painting of some 200 years earlier, which they brought back and revitalized.

To us Chinese painting, though it is beautiful and faintly disturbing, is only the depiction of landscape. For the Chinese and Japanese it is nothing of the sort, but a sort of spiritual exercise or symbolic moment. It is, intensely and essentially, religious painting. Among the most popular objects of these paintings is the waterfall, bubbling and foaming from rock to rock. To the eyes of the follower of Zen, the water is symbolic of the power that penetrates everywhere, and conquers resistance with certainty, no matter how powerful that resistance, by wearing it down. Such paintings are not decorative or designed merely for pleasure. They are designed to be contemplated. For if Zen cannot be put into words, it can be shown, not so much by visual symbols, as by the movement of the living brush. Thus no Zen painter would paint a leaf from the tip to the stem. He would paint it as it grew, from the stem to the tip. Zen painting, particularly in the form of sumi, or ink painting, is designed not to show the outward forms of nature but the principles of its movement and growth. Oriental art, with the dubious exception of portrait-painting, is designed to be generic, rather than particular.

Thus the Zen painter, Ching Hao, in the 10th century, considered the six essentials of painting to be spirit, rhythm, thought, scenery (motif or subject matter), brush, and ink, in that order. Hsieh Ho (circa 500) never asked his subjects to sit for him, but after a glance comprehended their essential nature. He believed the prime condition of art to be a capturing of the life rhythms of the spirit in terms of the growth rhythm of plants, rocks, water, and the natural world.

As Osvald Siren points out in his *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*, whatever this theory may be interpreted to mean specifically, it clearly refers to something beyond mere material form, and just as

<sup>4</sup> René Grousset, *Art of the Far East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 9.

clearly to the innate animating principle operative within all forms.

There is a story of the Chinese Emperor who wished to establish a new heraldic picture for his seal, in this case a rooster, the best and most essential rooster any artist could produce. The Emperor therefore ordered the greatest painter of his empire to set to work. The painter agreed, but said that he would have to do quite a bit of studying. He was granted a stipend, and studied for a year. At the end of the year he was not ready. The process was repeated for three years. At the end of that time the Emperor ordered the painter to appear at court. The painter did so, but brought nothing with him. The Emperor demanded his picture. The painter said he had it, and asked for paper, brush, and ink. When these were brought he instantly drew the picture, taking about five seconds.

Westerners have spoiled this story by adding that the painter then showed the Emperor a closet containing his 10,000 preliminary studies. Actually the painter had made no such studies. Instead of preparing studies, for after all he knew how to paint, he meditated upon the essence of the rooster until he had grasped it.

Another tale about a painter and an emperor tells us of a geological survey ordered for the northwest frontier of China, which has always been an imperial problem. The famous painter was sent out to study the mountain ranges that were considered the frontier. As he came back he had memorized the hundreds of miles of mountains in silhouette, and he then painted their outline on the palace walls. The Emperor came, and recognized the mountains, for he had himself seen the border. "But," said he, "I recognize this pathway to Tibet, but this other one I do not know. Where does it lead?"

The painter said, "I will show you," and going towards the picture, he entered it, followed the path, still talking to the Emperor, and disappeared behind a mountain, never to be seen again. The meaning of the anecdote is, of course, that the painter was so close to his work that his outward appearance and ego were totally lost in the task itself.

Brush paintings are chiefly executed in either the kakemono, or vertical, or the makemono, or horizontal, style. Makemono are often many yards long.

The makemono is seldom looked at complete, but is unrolled gradually. As the unrolling begins, at first nothing is seen; then nothing; and one continues to find nothing. After some time, a foggy touch of

雲氣滿空堂嶙峋  
 一笏長呼足將下拜已讓米襄陽  
 子任筆於



PLATE ELEVEN

Here is a stone. It is a particular stone, to be sure, but every stone is a particular one. You can see it, pick it up, feel its hardness, its roughness,

landscape fades in until, at last, the picture is reached. The picture itself is chiefly composed of the blank areas, defined by a few lines. For, as we learned from the *Tao te King*, "We do not look at doors and windows for their own sake, but because they are empty spaces that we can use. We don't manufacture and buy jars because they are made of any particular material, but because they are able to hold liquid." The empty space in all Chinese and Japanese painting is more important than what can be seen depicted there, and the drawing takes on value only insofar as it is set into a vast emptiness, the nature of which it serves to define.

This concept of emptiness is extended into all art and into all ways of living. Anything based upon the inspiring vision of Zen tradition has to have, as the Japanese say, *shibumi*, which we could translate by chastity or purity, but is usually used in the negative, so that as we would say something was too, too, the Japanese would say that it lacks *shibumi*.

There is a story of the great Zen master who had a tea-house garden in which he served and officiated at the tea ceremony; a house that had to be surrounded by a garden that, even if small, had to give an impression of vastness, and was landscaped to create the effect of a world in microcosm. The son of the Zen master was set to work to

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its very individual insistence on being, its stubborn demand of a place for itself. You cannot think it away; the universe must accept it in its speciality. It has to give room for it: its place and space will always belong to it and to no other thing.

And, what is more, its very ISness will prevail, will, if rightly looked at, open your mind to the equal ISness of all things and of yourself.

To be sure, you can break it in two or in many pieces. You can dissolve it, perhaps, and throw away the fluid, but then these transformed remainders of the rock will still carry its ISness, even if you scatter the pieces throughout all continents. Its Being prevails.

"This stone is full of cosmic air" says the inscription alongside the dedication to the person for whom this picture was drawn. All stones, of course, are full of cosmic air, but it takes a special, individual one to make us aware of this universal fact. Afterwards the whole world may appear as full of cosmic air.

It takes the snapping of the fingers of the Zen Master to make us realize that all noises are the voices of the Infinite.

This illustration is taken from a long series of rock pictures that contain the same message, in *The Mustard Seed Garden*, a Chinese book of instructions for painters, giving examples from many ancient and recent works of Chinese art.

clean the garden, to prove how much he had learned. When he had finished, the master said the job was poor and must be done all over again. The son worked another hour, and reported then that the garden was spotless. Whereupon the Zen master picked up a few leaves from a rubbish heap and scattered them about, saying, "Now it is beautiful. Now it is natural again. When the garden was spotless it lacked shibumi." It was too obvious, in other words. This same message of the importance of wu wei is echoed in all the Japanese arts.

Zen paintings seem to recede before the spectator, and to challenge him to read more into them than they show. It is the same method as mental jiu-jitsu. We meditate upon the empty spaces and supply what is lacking. At the end we discover that we have brought our own sensations into the picture. In it we found ourselves rather than any objective thing outside ourselves.

Indeed we should let our glance wander over the whole and focus the eye as if it were a question of looking behind the object portrayed into the limitless distance of the universe. Only then do we do justice to these pictures. They have a certain task. They are the object of exercise for the Zen monks. Submerged in their contemplation, the monks are to undertake the Yoga exercises.

Zen, and the associated ideas of shibumi and wu-wei, also had an immense influence not only on the content, but on the form of literature. Though the Japanese borrowed most of their culture from Korea and China, they did not borrow all of it, and what they did not take is almost as interesting as what they did. Yuan and Ching painting they politely ignored, in favor of Sung. The Chinese thought fiction a somewhat shameful and lower-class undertaking, of no literary value. The Japanese, on the other hand, developed the court epic. The Chinese dwelt in a vast cosmogony of impersonal nature forces operating in harmony, in which man had a very small subordinate place. The Japanese also believed in a cosmogony of nature forces, but in a totally different way. It is extremely difficult to pin down the exact nature of this difference. But the iconography of each country can show us a good deal of the difference. In China a depicted storm is apt to be a transitory incident in a vast landscape of harmonious calm. Chinese art hews, by and large, to the horizontal compositional values. Japanese art on the other hand, when it presents us with a peaceful landscape, is much more apt to

leave us with the impression that it represents a lull before the storm. In addition, there are, on the average, more stressed verticals; the empty spaces, touched with washes, are apt to be more swirling; and more interestingly perhaps, the kakemono is in general apt to be narrower in proportion to its width than is the Chinese painting. And Man seems more immediate in his presence than he does in Chinese art. The emotional range is different. There is infinitely more of the sexual, there is more of the grotesque, and Japanese art is filled with a procession of dwarfs, lepers, cripples, hunchbacks, fou-rire sufferers, anthropomorphic rabbits and monkeys. It can be paralleled not by the art of China, but by the subjects that appealed so strongly to the ancient Romans, as well as to the Hittites, who had somewhat different and religious reasons. There are perhaps two chief methods of dealing with reality in order to abstract from it its element of the Divine. One is to make it larger. The other is to reduce it to a microcosm. Either you reinforce, or fortify it, or else you distill it. On the whole the Japanese seem to prefer to distill it.

Thus during the 15th and 16th centuries, Japanese literature, which is enormously rich and complex, developed a new style of poetry called the haiku. The haiku contains only seventeen syllables in a line. It has no equivalent in Chinese literature, and in the western world the only forms that parallel it even remotely are the epigrams of Greek mythology and the Triads of Welsh poetry. With the utmost poverty of means, the utmost richness of feeling has been expressed. The ideal type of the haiku is the Matusima haiku, which consists of nothing but the name of the famous seashore resort Matusimaya repeated three times, along with a repeated interjection. *Matusimaya, ah ah Matusimaya, Ah Matusima.*

The haiku became the rage, and a form of literature especially congenial to women and to the court. Thus we have the lament of a young mother who lost her son of three, and who spoke her own haiku at the funeral celebration: "To catch butterflies, o little one, how far have you gone today." One states one thing in terms of another, with utmost brevity. And indeed it is true, the emotions cannot be described, they can only be alluded to. The haiku is designed, as the formal sonnet is with us, to contain brief statements about ultimate experiences. Even today the Emperor of Japan is supposed to produce one each year, on his birthday.



The greatest of the Zen Buddhist haiku poets was Basho, who flourished around 1500. He is known as the banana poet, because he planted a banana tree in his small yard in Tokyo. He created a good deal of poetry in this new style, which takes emptiness as a starting point and whose actual content is what is left out. Though requiring intensive skill, the haiku should give an impression of spontaneity. A haiku, it is said, must be like the wire-coil of a fan, connecting its various vertebrae. In his theory of art Basho demands that every haiku have a fuga. "Part from everything barbaric, remove yourself from the animal, follow pure nature, and return to the origin! That is what fuga means." It is at the same time a beautiful description of the spirit of Bushido.

All haikus contain descriptions of nature, usually of the change of the seasons. For the Zen Buddhist this content points up the dream-like change of existence and the perishableness of all its forms:

Spring is leaving.  
The birds weep.  
The eyes of the fish are full of tears.<sup>5</sup>

The poet is most moved when life and death in nature are combined with the fate of man. On his long pilgrimages as a Zen monk Basho often visited the historical landmarks of Japan, the battlefields in which at one time brave warriors lost their lives. He knows that even fame and renown last only for a short period. With the grass and weeds they wither away:

Grass of summer—  
The final trace  
of the life short as dreams  
of many a warrior!

This is probably the most famous haiku of Basho. In the original it reads:

Hatsu-kusa ya  
Tsuwamono-domo ga  
Yume no ato.

A Japanese writer relates the following anecdote of the poet's life: once Basho was wandering in a rural area at the time of the

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<sup>5</sup> Haiku translations in this chapter were done by the author.

full moon. He approached a village where a group of men were sitting with their rice wine and admiring the bright light of the moon. They were amusing themselves by composing haiku, as was customary in Japan at the time. Basho stopped to listen. One of the men hailed him, saying to his fellows, "That seems to be a mendicant monk. Let us invite him to come here and compose poetry with us. That will be fun." No one recognized the great poet, whose fame had already spread over the whole country. Basho joined them and they urged him to write a poem too. He refused. His excuses were laughed at. At last Basho smiled and began: "New moon—patient." They all roared with laughter. "This fool," they shouted, "he was to sing about the full moon." Basho continued:

New moon—patiently  
I waited since then,  
and now, tonight.

The men were completely taken aback, for he had made a perfect haiku, by discussing the full moon without even mentioning it. The ideal haiku does not discuss the subject by statement, but by surrounding it with some other statement from which its existence may be inferred. Therefore they knew they must be entertaining Basho and no one else.

The goal of the Japanese is to achieve perfection, not only in great things, but also in small and common ones. Every gesture is supposed to be unsurpassable. There is even an aesthetic way of peeling kale. Bushido demands that every action be carried out meaningfully and beautifully, not only in society, but also in the smallest details of private life, so that the contemplator may derive an artistic enjoyment from it.

In the long run this means that the importance lies not in what we do, but how we do it. An especially beautiful, well-prepared turnip, grown on cultivated ground and harvested at the right time, is incomparably nobler than an old goose fried with too much grease.

In Europe the carp is equally expensive under all circumstances. This lack of distinctions is incomprehensible to the Japanese. What matters to him is the quality of the individual fish. The price is regulated accordingly, and may vary a great deal. This attitude applies to all other kinds of food, to flowers, to all kinds of raw materials. The Japanese behave in the evaluation of all things as we do only

with wine. To those who follow Bushido, everything without exception can become a symbol of the right manner of life.

Zen disciples, however, have arranged a special ceremony that serves to remind people constantly of the significance of small things, and the expressive power of a delicate gesture. This is the rite of drinking tea.

For a long time the calming effects of tea drinking have been observed. And since the social ethics of Bushido censure any vehement expression of emotion as unbecoming, tea is a fittingly beneficent calming remedy.

In the 12th century the Zen patriarch Eisai brought tea seeds from China and wrote the book *On the Beneficial Influence of Drinking Tea*. From this work there later evolved the rules of Sa-do, of the tea path, and the solemn ceremony called Cha-no-yu, which became the real focus of Bushido.

Every slightest movement necessary during the preparation, pouring, and drinking of tea has been fixed exactly, so that a whole course of study is necessary in order to master all the formalities of greeting, the correct methods of sitting down, the posture and manner of acceptance, and the drinking itself.

Diverse branches of art have since then grown out of the tea cult or Cha-no-yu. A separate science of implements arose that took care that all the implements of usage during the ceremony were in the best possible taste. Today Cha-no-yu has become an expression of the cultural singularity of the Japanese nation. For this reason the ceremony is observed especially by the upper classes of urban society, in order to constitute a worthy counterpart to the progressive westernization and technological change of external everyday life.

Sa-do, the tea path, also stimulated architecture. Tea pavilions arose everywhere, standing in the middle of gardens. All are ruled by Bushido.

Especially important is the design of the garden, through which one approaches the tea pavilion. Bushido is the foundation of Japanese garden culture. If the ideal of the Confucian gentleman was to conform to the harmony of nature, which was in itself harmony; the ideal of the Japanese, by contrast, might be said to recreate and to experience that nature. Nature is not something to admire from a distance, to the Japanese; rather it is something to strive to become

in one's self. The intensity of their feeling for it is hard for us to grasp. This feeling perhaps arises from the fact that the Japanese have been more exposed to the vicissitudes of nature than have either their Chinese neighbors or the western world. They are intimate with the weather. Everything that happens between earth and sky has become a symbol for his own human existence to the Japanese. Every flower is an expression of a certain thought. When he shapes and cultivates the earth, when he creates a small garden, he intends with this work to cultivate the inner world of his ego. The culture of gardens is a form of shaping himself.

According to the rules of Bushido, a garden is to be neither too wild nor too artificial. Either form would be unbearable for our souls. Nothing may be lacking in this world of small things that is the garden. Therefore the cult of dwarf trees is practiced. It is better to have a miniature fir tree, than to have no tree at all. And in the house, nature is represented by the art of flower arrangement, which is highly developed, highly symbolic, and extremely traditional.

But Bushido has another than a gentle side.

The Zen patriarch Yoka says:

Since I found the path to truth  
I am certain that one should not esteem life or death.  
Walking is Zen,  
Sitting is also Zen,  
If I speak I am silent,  
If I rest I hasten:  
In essence everything is  
The immovable, original one.  
If I am threatened by spear and sword,  
I never blink an eyelash.  
If poison sneaks toward me,  
I am not afraid.  
How often have I been reborn,  
How often did I die again!  
Incessant and immeasurable  
Life and death lasted.  
Yet since I, like a flash of lightning,  
Experience the highest truth  
I care no more about good or bad fortune.\*

In Zen Buddhism, where all worldly differences are erased in the contemplation of the ultimate truth beyond things, the transition

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\* *The Manual of Zen Buddhism*, p. 111.

from life to death is considered an unimportant occasion of which one does not need to make much. Life and death are only deceptive shapes in this dream world. It would therefore be stupid to show despair in the face of death. Only a person who does not know the ultimate foundations of his existence and is quite caught up in the dream that is reality can become excited about change and decay. Therefore Bushido demands composure and nonchalance even towards death. One even demands Yisei, or a worthy, dignified departure from life, indicating that the person in question approached his fate with a tranquil mind.

Significant last words in the western world are apt to be deceptive. Goethe's "Light, more Light," is admirable on the surface, until we realize that he might only have been demanding that the curtains be opened. The remark of the deified Roman emperor, who murmured "I feel I am about to become a God," is much more in the proper slightly mocking tradition.

Bodhidharma himself, and some of his successors, are reputed to have died in the correct meditation posture of Sa-Zen. It is related of one such patriarch that in order to sit in this way he had to break his legs, which would not bend. From this attitude one can see how contempt for death may be closely associated with cruelty. It is precisely when death has lost its terrors that hardness and cruelty in the execution of penalties become a necessity. The penalties of the East are notably severe. Since death is meaningless, the attendant horrors must be emphasized instead. To the Buddhist, human life is not the highest of all possible forms of existence. Dying is easy with such convictions, and we have already read of the early Buddhist disciples who erroneously endeavored to attain nirvana by committing suicide. Some of the Christians who were sacrificed in the arena, we read, actually had to force the lions to kill them, but did so quite willingly, in the hope of better things to come. The details may be read in Tertullian. To the Buddhist, a good karma attitude and a start for a new existence built up by meritorious action is much more valuable than a single life. To shirk an unavoidable death, by accident, murder, or suicide, may even endanger one's karma, while working no improvement on one's present circumstances. Bushido, with the assistance of Shinto, the primitive national cult and cults of Japan, makes forms of death possible that would be unthinkable in the West. Thus the suicide one-man torpedo was possible. Thus the

Japanese drama in which a Zen monk saves a valuable painting from fire by slicing open his bowels and keeping the painting in there, while he is burnt to a crisp, is conceivable, and harakiri, as well. But that such contempt for life may have its gayer side is shown in the manner in which, a hundred years ago, the popular humorist Ikku departed from life.

To the mourning students gathered around his deathbed he gave the solemn order that his body was to be burned without previous washing. When the funeral pyre was lit, everyone was much surprised at the appearance of a tremendous display of fireworks. Ikku had stuffed his garments full of them before his death. So the roaring laughter of the crowd accompanied him into his life in the hereafter. The true strength of a human attitude is shown not only in bitter earnestness, but also in the freedom of informal humor.

In Bushido we have made the acquaintance of a system of planning life that contains much everyday wisdom. Its aim is to translate into reality the profound insights into the ego and the world that we have seen in these examples. Its purpose is to achieve the utmost sanctification of existence. In this aspect it is a religious exercise. In its impact on daily life it is a much more all-embracing exercise than any other faith we have examined. As the modern Japanese author, Akutagawa Ryunosuke, says:

Bushido should by no means be regarded as the narrow-minded morality of an insular nation. Rather there was even that in it which should be identified with the Christian spirit in the nations of Europe and America. If through this Bushido a trend could be shown in the modern current of thought in Japan, it would not only be a contribution to the spiritual civilization of Japan alone, but it would be, in addition, advantageous in making easy a mutual understanding between the Japanese people and the peoples of Europe and America.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Akutagawa Ryunosuke, *Tales Grotesque and Curious*, trans. Glenn W. Shaw (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1930).



THOUGH ZEN IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE IN JAPAN, so also is Shinto, the original, aboriginal, and national religion of Japan that, together with Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, created Japanese civilization as we know it today. Shinto goes back to two historical sources. In the 8th century A.D. a man named Yasumaro, a mere officer of the fifth rank, became more famous than many an emperor and many a higher official at court, for he had been ordered by the Emperor to write down all the legends and myths pertaining to the lineage of the Imperial house. Yasumaro traveled extensively throughout Japan and everywhere recorded the fairy-tales and stories that he found in visiting the villages. In 712 A.D. he edited his research under the name of *Kojiki*, or old annals. The old annals are a magnificent piece of synthesis, beginning with the creation myths and following the line of emperors down into the period at which Yasumaro wrote. But the emperor was far from satisfied, and immediately ordered Yasumaro to go out and record the differing versions of such ancient stories as well. This second task took Yasumaro eight years, instead of the decades he had devoted to the previous compilation, and the second volume, which he called the *Nihongi*, or history of Japan, is an unreadable work in many ways, since it repeats the same motif with slight variations over and over again. It does, however, supply a great deal of information to the student of anthropology. Most of our knowledge of ancient Japan is derived from these two works, from the *Kojiki* in particular. Yasumaro worked under severe difficulties, for though he remembered and recorded all stories in the Japanese language current in his time, he had no alphabet at his disposal in which to write them, so he had to select Chinese ideograms to match the words of the

Japanese language. Though Chinese and Japanese share, with minor modifications, the same written symbols, they are totally different languages. What Yasumaro was describing was the Kami no michi, the way of the kami, but he could not write that out phonetically, having no alphabet, so he selected matching words from the written Chinese. Kami is a leading or essential person, the power a father has over his children, an emperor over his people, and the powers of nature over mankind. In order to transliterate this word, Yasumaro chose a Chinese ideogram that stood for spirit or ghost: 𪚩

which was probably in its original form the abridged picture of a statue of a divinity mounted on a table or altar; in Chinese this is the word shin; in Japanese, the word kami. For michi, which means the course or way, he chose a Chinese ideogram we have already en-

countered: 道 tao, pronounced in Japanese to. Thus Shinto,

the name of the aboriginal Japanese religion, is a combination of two Chinese words, shin and tao or to, the way of the ghostly God. In this translation, however, Yasumaro introduced a viewpoint or interpretation of the recorded religion of the people that shifts the popular meaning of Kami no michi into something quite alien and different.

Later philosophers, even in the 19th century, blamed Yasumaro for having done this, for they say he should not have chosen the ideogram for shin in order to express the character of kami, but rather the ideogram: 人 man, and should have called the Japanese native creed the way of man, rather than the way of the Gods. Such critics were humanists who wished to indicate to their own time that Shinto was not a superstitious creed based upon a belief in Upper Powers, but the veneration of great men, heroes, and ancestors.

For that matter, kami itself is a word of doubtful derivation. Some claim that the word may come from the word kamui, which means a ghost, in the language of the Ainu (the first aborigines of Japan, who are to the Japanese roughly what the Red Indians are to us; they have been driven into reservations where they pursue their own customs, but are neither assimilated nor a vital part of the succeeding

population). The Ainu worshipped Kamui. Again, it has been suggested that the word kami is a rendering of the Polynesian word tabu, that which is specially marked and therefore untouchable, because loaded with some kind of secret and sacred energy. From this doubt we may judge that no one is quite certain of the most important element in the Japanese heritage. We know that the Ainu were the original inhabitants of the islands, but they were overwhelmed by two separate waves of invasion coming at a later time; one from China, perhaps by way of the Korean kingdoms; and the other by sea, from Polynesia. The Polynesians, mostly warriors and fishermen, imposed that aspect of their character, whereas the agricultural culture was based largely on Chinese lines.

The *Kojiki*, the book in which Yasumaro describes Kami no michi, or Shinto, the way of the Upper Powers, commences with a long genealogy of kami, whom we may not quite say were gods, for they are as doubtful in their divinity as were the devas of ancient India. We should rather think of the various kami as angels or powers. One kami dies and another succeeds him, to the number of sixteen bombastic names that appear to be chiefly of an astrological character until we come to the seventeenth and eighteenth kami, who are Izanagi and Izanami, the primal parents, or male and female principles.

Izanagi and Izanami were ordered by their fellow deities to give birth to Japan. This they accomplished by dipping a spear into the World Ocean. The brine that fell from the spear when it was raised from the sea formed the first island, the island now called Onogoro.

This is a genteel translation. The primitive thought and modern folklore, as well of much of the art of Japan is squarely, literally, pervasively, and sometimes rather naïvely sexual, and specifically phallic, without being pornographic in the sense in which we use that word. Having created in this manner the first island of Japan, and later the other islands and the continent, Izanagi and Izanami decide to marry. So we read a description of the aboriginal marriage ceremony of Japan which demanded that the couple should circle around the central house column, the woman saying that her body lacked one part, the man that his had one part superfluous. Thus they could be perfectly wedded only when joined. The woman went round the column from the left, the man from the right. When



PLATE TWELVE

Izanagi and Izanami creating the world, illustrating one of the legends collected in the *Kojiki*.

they met they spoke to each other. They were then considered to be formally married.

Unfortunately, in the case of Izanami and Izanagi, Izanami spoke first, and this breach in etiquette produced the Hiruko, or leech-child, a monster.

This is the ceremony, and it is an important one in primitive magic, for civilization enters when instinctive or impulsive acts are governed by some controlling formula, usually magical. This space between desire and consummation is one of the first tokens of civilization, for it is a period in which to think and to savor experience, rather than to indulge blindly in it. So when you have this circum-ambulatory recitation of formulas you already have a certain formalization, or derustication, of life. But because Izanami spoke first, the marriage goes wrong. The woman should never speak first. It is not suitable. Therefore the heavenly pair repeated the ceremony, this time correctly.

This difficulty seems to indicate that the matriarchal society prevalent when these legends were first fabricated was already changing into a patriarchal society, and the failure of the first marriage ceremony not only points up the change, but the rightness of it. The heavenly pair, who, incidentally, are also brother and sister, now give birth to dozens of perfect children, all kinds of kami, each ruling a different part of the cosmos and of this world, until we come to the 33rd kami, the fire god.

The fire god burns Izanami's womb, and kills her. Or, in the words of the *Kojiki*, "she divinely retired." Izanagi is so furious with the child that he cuts it to pieces. Violently in love, Izanagi descends to the underworld to reclaim Izanami. The similarity to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is great. Izanagi forces his way into the underworld to no purpose, for he is so frightened when he sees Izanami's deteriorated body that he has to flee, pursued by a hundred thunders and by the ghost of Izanami. Izanagi escapes from the underworld and Izanami with difficulty. Feeling unclean and in need of purification, he takes a ceremonial bath. As he rises from the water he wipes his left eye.

Then he wipes his right. From the wiping of his left eye is born the Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity; from the wiping of the right, His Augustness Moon-Night Possessor. When he wipes his nose, he gives birth to the storm god. The Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity is Amaterasu Omikami, the sun goddess. The Moon god is male.

That the Japanese should have a male god of the moon and a female deity of the Sun is not what we have been led to expect, but the explanation may again lie in the aboriginal changeover from a matriarchy to a patriarchy. Many of the ancient Japanese folk tales

are concerned with these three major kami, and Amaterasu is still considered the primal ancestress of the Japanese Imperial House.

One story all Japanese know well, and it is shown in innumerable paintings. Amaterasu is frightened by her impetuous brother, the storm god, and retreats into a cave (a record of the eclipse of the sun). All the kami of heaven are worried about her disappearance and wonder what to do. They employ trickery. They hang a mirror against a tree facing the cave and place a strong kami, the rope bearer, next to the entrance of the cave, which can be closed by a stone. Then a female kami, Utsume, creator of the dance, entertains the kami to the sound of a drum. Made curious by the sound of laughter, Amaterasu wants to know what is going on and peeks out of the cave. When she has left it, the rope-bearing kami lowers the stone and closes the entrance. Seeing her face in the mirror, Amaterasu is dazzled by its splendor and so brought back into the assembly of kamis.

This mirror, in similitude, becomes one of the great religious objects of Shinto worship, together with the string of beads Izanagi, her father, gave the sun goddess, and a sacred sword cut from the tail of a dragon. These three objects were called Shintai, or magic objects, and were kept in a special room of the Imperial palace. They were so holy that they had to be carefully wrapped, and new wrappings were put over them whenever the former ones fell into decay. In the course of time they therefore became quite large bundles.

In the *Kojiki*, Yasumaro reports that one of the emperors could not bear to have these all-too-holy power-laden objects on his couch with him at night while he slept (where they were originally kept) so he built a special room to house them. This act, according to Yasumaro, explains the origin of Shinto shrines. The emperor had replicas made of the holy objects, had these wrapped, and kept them on his couch at night instead of the originals. After a while he became nervous about the replicas as well, so in time they also went into a special room. The original objects were removed to Kyoto, where they are still thoroughly wrapped up and protected, and housed in a special wooden building.

There are innumerable kinds of Shintai, or holy and semi-holy objects, around Japan, both in private homes and in shrines; and in addition, every famous mountain in Japan is a Shintai in itself, as is



any specially-shaped tree or stone. All extravagant natural objects are thus objects of worship.

One of the most widespread of the Shintai has a history worthy of examination. This is the famous gohei, of which literally millions may be seen in Japan. A gohei is a strip of paper that you tear up and down and place on a stick to display in some strategic place. Originally the gohei represented the clothing dedicated to a deity, the clothes being an offering on the part of the worshippers, as images of the Virgin Mary are laden with lace and jewels in certain countries. Later on, the custom developed that instead of making a cloth offering to the deity, people would give a little money instead, and receive in return a gohei, or lucky object promising good fortune for the rest of the year, at the behest of the god. From this custom we may see that whereas originally Man served the gods, as a religion becomes more demanding and more settled, the gods must serve Man. The gods serve man best through something purchased at a temple, whose price assures the preservation and maintenance of the priesthood. So we have the evolution of the priest from a man of personal insight into the nature of the ineffable, or one striving to bring such insight to others, to a man who has a vested interest in his own position. When that point is reached—for men are jealous not so much of each other, as of the social roles that they severally may hold—then you may be sure that the stage is set for the advent of a reformer, almost in accordance, one is tempted to say, with the hexagram of the *I Ching*, which balances one extreme with another, across the symbolic wheel.

The pantheon of Shinto is rich and manifold. Every important nature object, every building or artifact of man, has its own particular protective kami. Even today, when an oil well is being dug or an irrigation ditch being dredged, the workers in Japan will assemble and give some kind of ceremonial worship to the spirit of the well or ditch. We do much the same kind of thing when we open a new highway or a dam, though our demonstration is apt to be more patriotic than religious in character. We must not forget, however, that patriotism and religion go hand in hand. The devotion of a child before the American flag, though of a different degree, is of the same order as his devotion before, let us say, the altar or the cross. The French differentiate between two kinds of patriotism, that to the nation, and that to the piece or area of ground where one was born.

The second of these precedes the first, both in personal emotion, and in history, for though the nature of the government may change, the nature of nature never does. To the Japanese, with their enormous sense of attachment to nature, patriotism and religion are thus virtually inseparable, for the religion has grown out of the nature that surrounds them, in the case of Shinto, and is expressed by means of an interpretation and study of that nature, in the case of Bushido and Zen. In the western world, where the primitive nature cults are almost completely extirpated; where a modern feeling for nature cannot be said to arise much before the Renaissance; and where the dominant religion, Christianity, if it betrays any feeling for nature at all, does so in terms of a landscape unknown to most of the Christian world; this close interdependence of patriotism and religion is barely possible. But it does exist in vestigial form.

If we find the notion that anything so modern as an oil well should need the offices of anything so primitive as a kami, we should remember first of all that the purpose of an oil well is to produce oil, which has always had a kami; that every religion survives by adapting itself to new conditions not reckoned on when the religion was formulated; and that Buddhism and Shintoism embrace all natural phenomena, whereas western religions do not concern themselves with natural phenomena at all, but only with Mankind. Yet even in the western world, Catholicism has extended the protection of the saints to modern conditions, extending their patronage to stenographers, baseball players, parachutists, and pilots. St. Michael, for instance, who destroyed the dragon, is the patron of pilots, and in particular, of bomber gunners. Any system erected by Mankind, if it is to survive, must adapt itself to the demands of Mankind. The Italian Church, though it does not officially recognize their existence, does nothing to interfere with many local saints, who sometimes serve highly modern and unusual requirements. The peasantry of northern Portugal, during the Napoleonic wars, were convinced, for instance, that *Nostra Senhora de Braça* was the patroness of draft evasion.

Patriotism and religious emotion are inevitably interwoven in primitive, child, group, magic, and liquid consciousness, so that today, with all the thousands of kami of the most diverse origin, we have a complex of all the things that may inspire terror, awe, or devotion. This primitive state of mind is preserved in the highly sophis-

ticated and indeed over-sophisticated and civilized ancient Japanese mentality. Because of the last world war, there is a tendency to regard Shinto as a deliberately concocted evil. It was not concocted, though it was used to reinforce the modern regime. Our concept of patriotism in America is limited to the national form. Yet we should remember that at the time of the Revolutionary war the inhabitants of what is now Vermont, though they did little to promote the independence of the nation, fought furiously and stubbornly when it was a matter of their own farms and lands being invaded. We live in an urban culture. We tend to forget that not only is urban culture a very recent thing, but that it has produced few of the basic ideas that continue to dominate the mind of Man.

As history proceeds, and as Buddhism was first introduced into Japan in the year 551 A.D., we encounter the most incredible mixture of native magic and highly abstract philosophy, the latter derived from India, by way of China, in the form of Buddhism, and from China in the forms of Taoism and Confucianism. The Japanese imported Chinese culture in one piece and deliberately, in exactly the same spirit, and also in exactly the same way, that Peter the Great imported European culture into Russia, for the enlightenment and civilization of his own court, and through the court, of his people.

Buddhism, with its many sects, and Shinto, with its many schools, merge in a strange manner, creating what was later to be called Ryobu Shinto, or double Shinto, a hybrid that had Buddhist aspects but kept all the primitivism of the basic Shinto ritual.

Japanese philosophers, if they called themselves Buddhists, developed a theory that the innumerable kami, though powerful and not to be abolished, were to be considered as an aspect of the great Buddha and of Bodhisattva figures, which were the originals of which the kamis were the appearances or derivations. The chief member of this school was Kobo Daishi, born in 774, who beginning at the top, announced that Amaterasu was actually Amida Buddha. On the other hand those philosophers who considered themselves first and foremost as Shintoists, developed the exactly opposite theory that the kami were the originals of which the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were derivations. True, the Buddhist figures were real, had power, and their good sides, but they were merely offshoots of the primordial kami figures. Actually the two sects are

strongly similar, for it makes little difference whether you say Amaterasu is the real god and Gautama Buddha an avatar, or that Amida is a real god, and Amaterasu an avatar. The two interpenetrate each other, and that condition still exists today.

This mixture led the Meiji dynasty, about seventy years ago, to declare that Shinto was not a religion. Shinto was therefore handed over to the Ministry of the Interior to deal with, whereas Buddhism and all its various sects, establishments, and temples, was turned over to the Ministry for Religious Affairs. At that time it was officially stated that Yasumaro had been wrong when he rendered kami no michi as Shin tao, for clearly men had been meant by the kami nature forces, not gods, so that Shinto was no more, in essence, than ancestor worship. The lineage of the then emperor was traced back through Amaterasu, Izanagi, and Izanami to Jimmo Tenno, the legendary founder of the dynasty, and from him still farther through the first sixteen astral deities as described in the *Kojiki*.

Today we are faced with an anomalous situation, in which Shinto is a permissible and traditional patriotic ritual under the patronage of the Ministry of the Interior, but is not supposed to contain any of the religious elements that it quite clearly does contain, but that are deemed to inhere in Buddhism, which is under the Ministry for Religious Affairs.

Let it be said, however, that there are over 100,000 shrines given to Shinto worship, and practically every school has some sort of corner shrine where the photograph of the Emperor is kept and where it receives the same kind of veneration as the pictures of Lincoln, Washington, occasionally Jefferson, and the current President receive from us. Out of the 100,000 shrines devoted to Shinto, only twenty are devoted to the worship of the Emperor, and out of these twenty, nineteen were built after 1873. So we cannot say, as is often said, that Shintoism is primarily emperor worship.

In addition to Buddhist sects, there are today some thirteen Shinto sects in Japan, which might just as well be considered religious in character, since the words used for worship and the ritual practice are essentially the same as in any cult. Many a person engaged in their practice would find it difficult to say whether he was primarily a Buddhist or a Shintoist. Some Shinto sects even show definite influence of Christian ideas. Most of these sects are derived from

various pilgrimage societies especially formed for the purpose of sending a group of pilgrims from some village or town to one of the many mountains of Japan. The mountains themselves are considered divine, in the Shinto belief, so that the act of climbing them is in itself an act of worship.

Whether these mountain-climbing pilgrims in their white gowns feel any differently than we do when we climb the Rockies, the Sierras, or the Himalayas and Alps, is debatable. We might say that although the Japanese mountain-climbing pilgrim is not so religious in mood as he might say; neither is the western mountain climber as totally secular in his effort as he might think or pretend. There are certain transition points between feelings of spiritual and of physical elevation. Unfortunately they are impossible to make clear to those who have not experienced either or both of them, though the climber of mountains may understand the elevation of the mystic better perhaps than the mystic would understand the elevation of the mountaineer. Thus Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose experience of mountains was restricted to a visit to the lake district, but whose mystical experiences were intense, could say:

The mind has mountains; cliffs of fall  
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap  
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small  
Durance deal with that steep or deep.<sup>1</sup>

The image of the world mountain, by which we ascend to heaven, is to be found not only in Oriental thought, but also in such visions as Dante's *Purgatory*.

It is a general observation that we may make about the Japanese temperament, that though the civilization of Japan, in part an imposed civilization, has forced a great deal of self-control and even of repression upon the Japanese, they free themselves of this burden

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#### PLATE THIRTEEN

A landscape by Sesshu (1421-1506), a noted Japanese painter of the Zen school. Man's subordinate place in the world of nature forces is taken as a matter of course. Nature itself is always depicted as vital and alive; full of the growth process—of simultaneous becoming and dwindling, not as the static 'view' of occidental landscape-painting.

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<sup>1</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 106.





when they reach a higher elevation. Not only in the Old Testament, but in many other spiritual traditions, do you read that mountains harbor a higher spirit. It is a traditional trait of the Japanese race that as they go up to the pinnacles they behave like different beings, indulging in a free behavior they would not dream of displaying in the organized and traditional framework of their sea-level towns and villages. Indeed, if we examine the physiological effects of altitude and of depth upon the human body, we can see a reason for this change, even if we do not wish to pursue the matter into the realms of psychological process. It is not in the heights that we find what Herman Melville referred to as "the ribs and terrors of the whale." But we cannot say glibly that the Japanese borrowed their civilization and that it is imposed upon their temperament. The culture they borrowed was borrowed; not imposed, but self-imposed, and therefore it did not obliterate their own native and primitive culture. Unlike the ancient Romans, who out of a sense of cultural inferiority took over Greek civilization bodily and tried to obliterate their own primitive one, the Japanese selected only what they wished to use, without any thought whatsoever of obliterating their native tradition.

The borrowings of the Japanese from the modern West had no more changed their culture than have their borrowings from ancient China. Buddhist Shinto is perhaps best illustrated by Kurozumi-Kyo, founded by the Samurai Munetada in 1824. It has roots in Yoga. Its followers believe that they carry the sun goddess consciously in their hearts, and that their respiration inhales and exhales her. Thus by breathing exercises they achieve integrity and quietude, and through yoga cure sickness and disease. They also adapted the older Neo-Confucian philosophy stemming from the yang and yin principle. Buddha and the sun goddess were identified with each other. Munetada became possessed of yo-ki, or sun spirit, and became a kami. His philosophy was dualistic. He believed in yo-ki and in-ki, brightness and gloom. Gloom and evil resulted from self-ignorance, which could be cured by breathing exercises, or the intaking of yo-ki, or goodness, and by the cultivation of the heart. It was a laic yoga philosophy, and Munetada has 15 million followers.

In later times, there arose Tenri-kyo, or heavenly reason teaching, which is often called Japanese Christian Science. It numbers 10,000 congregations, of which there are twenty-seven in America,

and was founded by Mme. Omiki in the 19th century. Mme. Omiki had children of her own, but also had a foster child. The foster child contracted smallpox. Mme. Omiki had guilt feelings about the foster child, whom she had neglected for her own children, and therefore she offered up two of her own children if the foster child should survive. The foster child survived and her own children died. Mme. Omiki, after this traumatic experience, developed convulsions and experienced states of possession. She announced that she was the incarnation of Isanagi and adopted a Chinese dualistic philosophy of the yang-yin type. Her main doctrine was that the kami wish to see their children (Man) happy, and therefore her cult is a cult of joy, indulging in noisy dances, music, and drums. The temples of the sect have an opening in the roof, a hole similar to that of the Pantheon in Rome, through which the heavenly dew may pour in, curing all sicknesses by a sort of sterilization. The hole in the temples is a parallel to the hole in the head of kundalini yoga, through which the spirit may escape to higher realms. In particular the heavenly dew gives an easy birth at which no medical care is needed and it cures smallpox, or at any rate assures immunity against it. One of the strict rules of the sect is that no fertilizer is to be used in the fields, for fertilizer is seen to be the charred remains of evil matter. All diseases are caused by spiritual dust. Another tenet of the sect is that its members must perform free, or holy labor, for the common good. Thus, in one of the American chapters of the sect, at Berkeley, California, you may see Japanese students out cleaning the sidewalks with brushes and rags until they are spotless, for the world must be freed of the disease-causing spiritual dust.

There are dozens of these modern Shinto sects, and they have begun to sprout more than ever since the recent war. They are unofficial and not recognized by the government. They represent instincts in human nature searching for expression, but also puritanism, nature-cult romanticism, and even what we call fascism. The conflict between instinct and reason is an external conflict, and it seems unlikely that it will ever be resolved.

One of the chief cults is Omoto-kyo, or the teaching of the great fundamentals. Omoto-kyo was founded by an old woman who was neurotic and an ecstatic. She was virtually illiterate, and was the widow of a carpenter. She believed herself to be the messenger of the kami, sent by them to effect a fundamental "rebuilding." This

she expressed in the language of a carpenter, and as we have seen, the forms of address are very important in Japan, so that the language of a carpenter is not the correct one with which to refer to religious matters. She was heavily censured and derided. She wrote down the messages of the kami by means of automatic writing, and began to propagandize. She was maltreated by her neighbors and persecuted by the police, but her fervor was only increased. The sect gained great prestige, however, because it predicted the invasion of Japan that took place in the second world war. According to Omoto-kyo the entire world will be destroyed, except for the small town of Ayabi, from which the founder came. From there the world will be repopulated by a host of kami and by this means the whole world will be subjugated to the rule of Ayabi. Present followers of the sect will automatically become high officials in this future theocratic state, and the descendants of the founder will be the messengers of the kami. Of an almost unbelievable chauvinism, the sect alarmed the Japanese government, for it imperiled the reputation and good intentions of the State. They attempted to suppress it by violence, but it long flourished in China, Manchuria, and the outlying districts of Japan.

Another sect that is not Shinto, but has many adherents in Japan, is Shinran Buddhism, founded by Shinran in the 13th century. Shinran taught that since the Buddha's grace alone saves, nobody need fear any sins. This doctrine had immense success among the young. Today Shinran teaches that it is not even necessary to feel remorse for sin in order to be saved. Indeed it is better not to feel remorse, since joy is the only factor that counts in a faith. It was one step further to a glorification of the human passions, since it is the character of the Japanese to be forthright and direct about the sexual side of life anyway. Modern Shinran holds that love is the true reality, and that it is not to be understood as an abstract principle, but is to be personally experienced, existentially, by everybody. It is a carnal reality; and the most fervent sexual lover is best entitled to be saved by the Buddha. This belief is the equivalent of Indian Tantrism. Instinctive love is identified with religious faith, and purity can be found only in the life of the primal instincts.

By examination of such sects, it can be seen that the Japanese mind is direct, empiric, pragmatic, and apt to lodge the abstract squarely in the physical. Great dangers to others are involved in

granting freedom to the self. But on the other hand there are equally great dangers to others in denying the self, and though their cause may be different, the outward manifestations are much the same. The Japanese are more apt to escape from everyday reality by embracing it, or by identifying it with spiritual reality, than they are to deny that it has any validity.

There are today innumerable Shinto sects, but they are not necessarily Shinto in nature. They use the name in order to derive protection from it. Shinto represents the primitive or instinctive traits of religious life, in contrast to doctrinal religions, and tries to supply the masses with religious help. But all successful religions, no matter how sophisticated or civilized their founders may be, can be traced back to a primitive source. And we have seen in the career of Buddhism how the very complex of primitive elements that the founder of faith endeavors to abolish always creeps back in as the faith spreads out and embraces those followers who demand primitive satisfaction.

HAVING EXPLORED THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF Buddhism, and the various forms it took, we must now double back both in space and time, to consider its career in Tibet and the states, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim, which are culturally and religiously the satellites of Tibet. Geographically and ethnologically Tibet is an isolated and autochthonous entity. The form of Buddhism that developed there is equally so.

There are in reality even now two religions in Tibet, Mahayana Buddhism and the Bon religion of antiquity, a primitive ritual characterized by magic, sorcery, witchcraft, belief in ghosts, cases of human and animal possession, blood sacrifice, and lingering traces of human sacrifice. Mahayana Buddhism entered Tibet about 1,000 years after the death of Gautama Buddha, when the University of Nalanda was flourishing, and when Mahayana Buddhism had reached a high point of development under the sages of Kashmir, which is next-door to the large and geographically vague area that is Tibet.

The earliest date we can be even remotely sure of in Tibetan history is that of the reign of the great king Srong Tsan Gampo, who ruled in the 7th century. To all intents and purposes this date marks the beginning of Tibetan history. Srong Tsan Gampo was a powerful monarch, and managed to unite many of the countries peripheral to Tibet proper, petty states that today are part of India, Russia, and China. Tibet as we know it today is merely the heartland of what, under Srong Tsan Gampo and for some time afterwards, was a vast empire extending on the south as far as the Gulf of Bengal, where Calcutta stands today, and to the East, almost as far as Peking. Thus we might say that the claim of the present Communist

government of China to Tibet might equally be a Tibetan claim to China, if historical precedent counts for anything. At the foot of the Potala, the enormous palace in Lhasa, capital of Tibet, are stone engravings that record treaties in which the two countries promise not to usurp each other's boundaries.

King Srong Gampo wished to consolidate his expansionist ambitions by marrying two princesses, one from China and one from Nepal. The Princesses were Buddhists at a time when Buddhism had scarcely been heard of in Tibet; they determined to convert their husband; they succeeded, and after some time Srong Tsan Gampo introduced Buddhism as virtually the state religion, meaning that at the same time he tried to abolish the ruthless and primitive Bon faith indigenous to his empire.

In order to introduce Buddhism it was necessary to civilize Tibet, from its courts and administration down to its manners. The two princesses, or queens of Srong Tsan Gampo, are still worshipped in Tibet as high deities of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon, under the names of Green and White Star, the Green and White Tara. They are portrayed again and again in temple paintings. Their influence in life, as after it, was vast. Directly or indirectly, they revised Tibet from top to bottom.

The regime established by Srong Tsan Gampo eventually collapsed after his death, and the rule passed into the hands of the lamas, or Buddhist monks and abbots. Today, though reduced in its frontiers, Tibet has about five million inhabitants. Of these five million a million and a half are lamas, or monks living in monasteries and small monastic settlements, many of them married, with families and children, and many carrying on some sort of trade. In this function they are more useful than the armies of the ancient kingdom, which were of about the same size and infinitely more destructive and costly. The Dalai Lamas, or Superiors, and their regents, of whom the present Dalai Lama is the fourteenth, are the temporal rulers of the country, assisted in their rule by a national assembly convoked once yearly. One curious thing about the Dalai Lama is that, since he represents the same person in a later incarnation, he is not hampered by the decisions of previous lamas, which, since they are his own decisions, can be revoked by him. Thus the thirteenth Dalai Lama, when he was told he could not do something because the fifth Incarnation had forbidden it, completely routed



his advisers by asking them, "And who was the fifth Incarnation?" The Dalai Lama, and to a lesser degree, in spiritual affairs only, the Panchen Lama, inherit not only the office, but also the person, which gives them a degree of omnipotence not granted to the usual inhabitant of a throne.

Tibetan Buddhism, at first antagonistic to the primitive Bon religion, or to be more accurate, magical system, gradually took over many of its ideas and practices, so that today we find a complete mixture of highly refined abstract meditative thought rooted in Mahayana philosophy and the crudest type of ritual practice.

Srong Tsan Gampo and his immediate successors in the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries repeatedly sent ministers to India to ask various pandits of the Buddhist faith to come to Tibet and spread the gospel. Many of these pandits came from Kashmir, and from as far away as the University of Nalanda, near Benares. The chief of the missionaries was the Kashmir pandit Padmasambhava, an adherent of Tantrism, who built the first monastery in 749 A.D. In time he came to be worshipped as a saint, and is known in Tibet as Guru Rimpoche. One of the missionaries introduced a system of writing, for Tibet had none before the 8th or 9th century. The Sanskrit alphabet system was used, modified slightly for Tibetan use, since Tibetan is a language totally unrelated to the Indo-European tongues, though it now incorporates many words introduced from Sanskrit. Tibetan is also independent of the Chinese language group, belonging to what is called the Tibeto-Burmese language complex, one whose origins and etymology have scarcely been explored.

As the Indian Buddhists explored the new missionary ground, some of them realized they would have to utilize the old Bon customs in order to implement their own doctrine, and that they would have to Buddhize, so to speak, these practices, that is, to give them a Buddhist interpretation, since they could not be abolished altogether. Other religions have dealt with the same problem in the same way, and many a Christian saint presides over the functions of a pagan deity, as for example St. Valentine, whose person christianizes an entire festival, and St. Christopher, who probably replaces Hermes and the infant Dionysus, but whose story exactly parallels that of Jason and Proteus. Many Christian rites are pagan in origin, such as baptism and much of the mass. So it is with Buddhism. Probably the greatest value to us of the Tibetan religion is that it gives



PLATE FOURTEEN

Padmasambhava; in Tibetan, Guru Rimpoche. The Indian Buddhist missionary who succeeded in giving a philosophic Buddhist-Tantric system of expression to the strong native Tibetan Bon religion.

us an example of such a stark mixture of primitive fervor and sophisticated thought, each of which has its own message and its own audience.

If we ask what the message of a primitive religion might be for the present civilized world, we might answer that the answer is best discovered by establishing what we have lost by becoming civilized. What we have lost, primarily, is the immediacy of the animal side of human nature, with its realities of life and death, realities whose abrupt and sometimes shocking vigor we are apt to overlook in an abstract pushbutton culture. Such realities tend to survive in folk religion, rather than in more sophisticated forms proper to the higher classes. And they survive in Japan, where far from overlooking them, perhaps the Japanese, at least to our view, look at them a little too much. They are central to Tantric Buddhism, and Padmasambhava, or Guru Rimpoche, who brought Buddhism to Tibet, was a Tantrist.

Primitive religion may be highly inaccurate from a scientific point of view, but at least it is constantly aware that human actions have drastic human results, and therefore should be treated with care. We cannot perceive the dignity of man unless we also see the depths to which he can fall, and in a polite and remotely-controlled society we are little apt to see either until the machine has a breakdown, as it does approximately once a generation, usually in the form of a war or depression whose lessons we do our best to forget. We are far from controlling our own power, and insofar as magic, ritualism, witchcraft, sorcery, or necromancy make us aware of the more dangerous aspects of that power, they are not without their uses. Civilization touches the conscious mind, but scarcely affects the subconscious; so that the more we know of the primitive subconscious the safer our conscious control is apt to be, for then at least we will know what we are controlling. Thus primitive rituals, on the credit side, rouse feelings essential to the religious temper, which should be neither abandoned nor overlooked, even when we aspire to higher consciousness.

This confused admixture was brought home to me very clearly as I went on a short trip into the Himalayas of Sikkim, a region between the present Indian and Tibetan borders that contains a good many monasteries scattered about in its forests, some of them Nepalese, some Bhutanese, and some Tibetan, the latter following a very

ancient form of Tibetan Buddhism. Sikkim is a country of extremes. The higher mountains of the Kanchinchnaga range soar to a height of 28,000 feet, and their lesser peaks are only lesser by degree. When the ever-present clouds suddenly part, the mountains, thirty miles away, look enormous, and in order to approach even their foothills it is necessary to plunge down from hillstations such as Kalimpong or Darjeeling into jungles that are in an eternal uproar. The combined chattering of monkeys, insects, and the screaming of birds is nerve-racking and completely overwhelms you. As I passed the frontiers of India at the great suspension bridge over the Rangit River, I had to present my elaborate passport, which it had taken more than a year to extract from the Maharaja of Sikkim and the Deputy Commissioner of Bengal. It was a document of heroic proportions, and the border official, who carried his gun upside down, looked at the passport upside down for about five minutes with the utmost gravity. Then, with a generous gesture, he handed it back and waved me on. Tibet is something like that: it lives swathed in layers of protocol whose chief function is providing a defense in depth, and can be waived whenever defense is not deemed necessary.

I went on my way with a small caravan of five people and one horse, traveling from one gumpa, or monastery, to another. The difficulties were enormous, exasperating, and comic. One of the coolies turned out to have a vicious turn of mind, and misguided me for eight and a half hours, apparently only in order to tell his friends at the campfire that night that he had misguided an American Sahib. He seemed to think that would make a good story, and no doubt it did.

I had been told beforehand that the lamas of the various small monasteries would have to be approached with great care, since they are not accustomed to strangers and are powerful magicians. It was not only the natives who told me to avoid certain villages. I encountered a European priest with a red beard who was by profession an airplane pilot, but who at the time ran a printing press. He traveled about on a bicycle, and warned me to avoid certain villages where the native women were so skilled at magic that whenever a stranger approached them they automatically transformed him into a goat, perhaps out of sheer high spirits. I told the priest I thought that many women in the western world did much the same thing, though in a slightly different way. He agreed, but said that though

I might understand the matter psychologically if I wished, it was really much deeper than that, and that he would have hated to see me shut up in a cage as he was bicycling through. Therefore I avoided those villages, for one can never be sure.

I saw a good deal of magic in operation, and concluded that it would have to be answered with magic, since nothing else would work. The best way to answer a question is to forestall it, and in these matters a grounding in psychology does wonders. I recommend the technique to anyone contemplating a visit to a gompā.

As you enter one of these wooden buildings—nearly all of them are three stories high, representing the three different initiation grades in the Tibetan Buddhist religion—you usually find yourself facing a huge sculpture of the Buddha, generally in a style derivative of the Chinese, and lacquered and gilded. If you are a foreigner, the best magic is to prostrate yourself before this Buddha for an hour, in an *asana* or meditation posture. Not only does this give you a much needed rest after you have climbed 4,000 feet up through thin air, with the prospect of climbing 4,000 feet down into the jungle again, but these statues are designed for meditation, the more elaborate the meditation the better. You are supposed to stare at them, first concretizing them in the foreground of your view, then, by concentrating on the tip of your nose you move them into the background, so that your focus is directed, so to speak, on the eternity beyond. By using this piece of magic—in short by arousing curiosity—simply by performing their rites, even though you are a foreigner, and performing them properly and with due seriousness, you will soon find all the monks of the monastery assembled to watch. They will then show you everything you want to see, down to the last corner, and will even go so far as to sell some of their old tankas and books.

The monks, particularly in the Sikkimese region, belong to the oldest type of Tibetan monkhood, and therefore wear a purple gown and a red, not a yellow, cap. Since it is extremely cold, over their gown, whose purple is apt to range from red to brownish grey, they are swathed in innumerable blankets and Tibetan sheep wool scarves. Sitting in these monasteries, which have windows but no glass, enveloped in drifting mists, you soon find that it really is necessary to drink from sixty to eighty cups of tea a day, spiced with rancid yak butter. The yaks are to be seen outside, with their huge

horns and strange white tails. Until recently yak tails were the second most important export article in the Tibetan economy, the first being yak wool. The yak tails, incidentally, are imported into the United States, where they are used exclusively for the manufacture of Santa Claus beards, as discovered by a trade commission, sent out by the Tibetan government in 1948 at the request of the Russians. Such, at any rate, is the story.

Some of the monks of Sikkim wished to show me, as a foreign visitor, some special mark of honor, so they asked me to carry out the morning service, which consisted of reading aloud from the Tibetan Buddhist scripture. My reading is extremely slow and somewhat halting. Any ten-year-old boy trained in reading the Tibetan translations of Buddhist scriptures could have done better. Besides, the reading was accompanied by obligatory noises on a variety of instruments, including conch shells imported from China, and the uproar was deafening, something like that of a bullroarer or of the Shofar blown at New Year's in a synagogue. It is a magic noise going back to the Bon religion that predated Buddhism, and it is accompanied by foot cymbals, gongs, gigantic drums, and what we would call Alpine horns. In the circumstances my voice could not produce the extremely deep tones that are supposed to permeate the room and change the ether and the structure of material things into their ideal nature, a sort of transubstantiation of the atmosphere essential to a Tibetan Buddhist service. No doubt the monks were deeply disappointed, but I did my best.

At the exit of a gumpa, and on the roads everywhere, you find the laymen turning their prayer wheels, which range from a size small enough to be carried on a key chain to enormous structures that can be set in motion only by the efforts of three or four men, and are therefore sometimes hooked up to a water wheel. Every prayer wheel, or more correctly, cylinder, contains written prayers, and if these are written by a living incarnation of the Buddha, they are doubly efficacious. Scholars in Tibet often give each other prayers to include in each other's drums, and the prayer is almost invariably the same, *Om mani padme hum*: a Sanskrit formula. *Om* is a word something like amen; *mani* is the jewel, signifying Buddhist wisdom; *padme* is the locative of *padma*, the lotus flower; and *hum* is the terminal amen. Thus we have "amen, the jewel in the lotus flower, amen." This formula is repeated fifty or many hundreds of times





PLATE FIFTEEN

Travelers through the realm of Tibetan Lamaism are often surprised to encounter strange, colorful contraptions on house roofs or over house doors that closely resemble complicated television antennae.

Studies of these objects have, in recent years, led to their being explained as ghost traps or magic devices to ban threatening demons of various kinds. The fear of the inhabitants menaced by dangerous influences is relieved by the lama-priests' solemn installation of a string construction designed to capture the menacing ghost in a bewildering,

and enclosed in the wheel. Every turning of the wheel repeats the prayer or prayers. The wheel must always be turned clockwise; if turned counterclockwise, it would undo prayers already accumulated through the years, decades, and even centuries, by such a drum.

I asked many men and women of the laity if they ever thought of the meaning of the prayer within the drum, but the answer was invariably that they did not have to think about it, for it worked by turning. This idea seemed somewhat staggering, until I realized the greatness of a faith so strong that it could take itself for granted, so that salvation was sure to be obtained by the performance of one simple act, leaving the mind and emotions free for the everyday uses of life. Few of us possess such certainty. For us a prayer is only efficacious when we participate in it with our mind, thought, and emotions. However, even in the Christian tradition this idea of involvement is a recent and a dangerous one, for if we feel that the divine process can only function by our intervention or participation, then, in needing our assistance, it becomes something less than divine, so that we are apt to believe that the Being of Being is the shadow of our thinking, rather than our thinking the shadow of it.

Tibetan worship is a mixture of many elements. The presiding lama, for example, carries at all ceremonies the thunderbolt, or

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spiderweb-shaped maze. The ghosts are trapped when the woolen balls at the tips of the trap feel moist. Demons, considered to be liquid, run along the strings and collect in the balls. After the ghosts have been caught, the whole trap is disposed of, either by being torn to pieces, or by being flung down a mountain slope.

The ghost traps (in Tibetan: *mdos*) are mounted on a "glud," a substitute sacrificial offering to the demons, sometimes made of clay mixed with ashes of the dead and molded into human shape. Into the glud are stuck wooden stakes on which pictures of men, women, children, animals, and sacred objects are drawn. These slabs may be considered as a secondary glud, meant to provoke the demons into venting their wrath on these substitutes for the people within the house. Small spiderweb flags set between the stakes are meant to do the initial job of luring the ghosts into the magic circulet of the ghost trap.

The author has brought to this country what all anthropologists consulted agree is the first complete collection of *mdos* ever to have been brought out of their homeland. This drawing, done by Corinne Spiegelberg, shows one example of the many slabs used in the installation of the ghost traps.

dorje, which derives not from the Bon religion, but from pre-Buddhist Indian custom, insofar as it is the thunderbolt of the god Indra, which he hurled in order to kill Vrtra, the clouds, when he refused to yield the waters of life and fertilize the earth.

Tibetan Buddhism, mixed with Bon, is governed by the real soul that is believed to migrate from body to body. The desire to save the soul from hell and lead it to paradise is one of the instrumental levers of Lamaism. Nor, says C. H. S. Ward in his book on Buddhism, is paradise synonymous with nirvana. Nirvana is attainable only by the Tibetan monks and nuns. Paradise is vaguely some otherwhere, or so the lay populace believes. Desire for salvation is accompanied by a dread of evil spirits. It is as a protection against these evil spirits that Bon practices exist. A religion of charms, amulets, and propitiatory rites that mix oddly but thoroughly with Buddhism, Bon has certain affinities with the modern deteriorated practices of magical Taoism. It has been considerably modified with the passage of time, however. Chinese chronicles of the 5th and 6th centuries mention human sacrifice by the Bon priest, but nowadays sacrifice is made with wool, yak hair, and images of men made of dough.

The Tibetan pantheon may be roughly sorted into five orders. First, there are the 28 chief Buddhas, including Gotama Buddha, of the various kalpas, or epochs of the world. Second, there are the Bodhisattvas, of whom the most celebrated is Avalokita, or Avalokitesvara, of whom the Dalai Lama is the incarnation. The Bodhisattvas, complemented by female taras, and by the Dakinis, or terrible female demons, sometimes become incarnate. The Abbess of the Samding monastery at Yamdok lake is supposed to be such. Third, there are the demon princes and their consorts, most of them horrible, but one or two beneficent, who derive from Bon and from Hindu mythology. Fourth, there are the Guardian Gods of the Four Quarters. And fifth, there are the saints worshipped by believers. Most are historical, most of them Buddhist, but some are legendary.

We must say something of the outstanding gurus or teachers of early Tibetan history. Sometime during the 9th century we encounter the vague figure of Tilo Pa. Of him we know only that he was the teacher of Na Ro Pa, whose biography is famous throughout Tibet. Na Ro Pa, which means His Mother's Best, when he was very young ran away from home to join a Buddhist monastery. There he de-

veloped such skill in learning that he became an abbot. One moonlit night, sitting with his back against the window, studying the translations of Buddhist texts, he suddenly saw a shadow fall on his books from behind him. It was the shadow of a witch, with all the 36 signs of ugliness: disheveled hair, warts, snaggle teeth, and a bad cough, among others. It seemed to him that this was the shadow of his mother.

The woman spoke, saying, "Can you read these books?" He said that of course he could. The apparition screamed with laughter and asked, "Do you also understand what you read?" Again he said that of course he did. There was another horrible scream, but he also heard weeping. He asked, "Why do you first scream and then weep?" The shadow witch said, "I laugh because you said the truth when you said that you could read these books; and I cried when you said that you understood their meaning, because you lied." The witch then disappeared, and thinking the matter over, Na Ro Pa realized that indeed he had not yet unlocked the secret contained in the Mahayana tradition. He fled from the monastery, evaded the monks, who wanted him back as their abbot, and for years roamed through the Tibetan mountains in search of the great teacher Tilopa, whom he could not find.

He became so desperate, that he began to cut his throat, but at that moment he heard a voice from heaven saying, "The teacher is found; from now on you will get instruction." The instruction he got was a ghostly one. On a narrow mountain pathway he encountered a dead dog half eaten by maggots. To avoid touching it he jumped over it, and heard laughter behind him. Once more he had missed the great teacher. "Here I was, Tilopa, in the shape of a dead bitch, and you missed me."

After this Na Ro Pa encountered all sorts of similar appearances: a man crushing skulls in a graveyard who asked him to help, for instance. Na Ro Pa said, "How can I? I am a monk in search of truth. I do not do such dirty things." The man in the graveyard said, "Unless you crush the skulls of your mother and father you cannot attain Mahayana insight." In psychoanalytic terms, we would say that unless you can be rid of father and mother transference, you cannot free your way of mundane ties.

Finally, in despair, Na Ro Pa goes almost mad. He sees a blind man who can see; a deaf man who can hear; a lame man who can

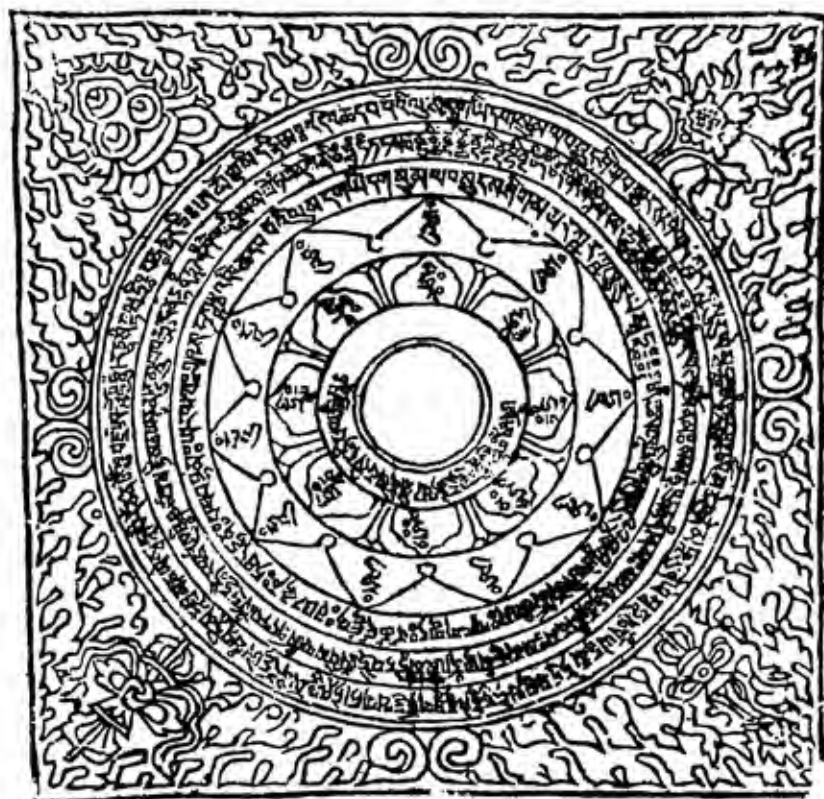


PLATE SIXTEEN

Just as a musical tune carries millions of associations, expressing, enlivening, and embracing one another, so does this mandala, which may be called "basic," contain and express all the wealth of Indian charmwords behind Lamaist worship, spells, and ceremony.

"Guard the body, mind, and speech of this charm-holder," is the repeated formula introducing power words from the holy Sanskrit language, many of which have no direct meaning capable of intelligible translation. Most of them are simply explanations arising from a state of high and excited vision, parallel to the glossolalia, the "gift of tongues" of early Christianity.

This is a letter-mandala: the whole of the alphabet is among its spells. The special significance of the alphabet is that it contains virtually all the holy names of the divinities, not in their rational form, but so to speak subconsciously, in their elements, which are germinal, and so even more powerful.

walk; and other human paradoxes. He takes shelter in a mountain cabin on top of a huge mountain on a cold night and warms himself at the fire. There enters a strange half-naked man with a fish in his hand who throws the fish in the fire in order to fry it. Na Ro Pa leaves the hut, for he cannot be in the same room with a man who kills another being. The fisherman turns out to be Tilopa, who is so far beyond ordinary moral standards that he is no longer restrained by them.

In short, Na Ro Pa has missed Tilopa again. We perceive that Tilopa is not a person, but a principle. After this encounter, however, Tilopa gives Na Ro Pa instruction, with the typical cruelty and primitiveness that characterize a Tibetan Buddhist preacher. The two men go together through a desert. In the midst of the desert Tilopa suddenly tells Na Ro Pa to draw a magic circle or mandala in which to pray and meditate efficiently and in security.

Na Ro Pa says, "How can I? I have no material, no paints." Tilopa tells him he has blood, and to open his veins and paint the outline of the mandala in red with his blood. Na Ro Pa does so. Tilopa says it is not yet a mandala, for it lacks four towers and four ends. Na Ro Pa says he has no sticks, for the desert is completely bare. Tilopa points out that he has fingers, and tells him to cut them off and put them at the four corners. In the end Na Ro Pa has practically to disembowel himself in order to finish the magic circle, but Tilopa, the teacher, simply laughs and with one pass over his body heals him entirely.

So it goes with all such descriptions. We are horrified, and yet at the same time we recognize something that touches the depths of our subconscious and that the Bon religion brings to the surface and still keeps alive in Tibetan Buddhism.

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In the flaming corners are the standard symbols of Buddhism. In the center of the eight-petal lotus is an empty space reserved for the letter or formula used to express the letter or formula of the immediate existential situation for the sake of which the mandala may be used and its power evoked.

Such mandalas ought to be drawn with special inks, materials themselves made pregnant with magic power by special invocations. In Tibetan legends even blood and the limbs of human bodies were used to create such a magic circle. With the circle, the priests endeavored to express the whole of the manifold universe in a condensed, enigmatic form, so that they could better survey and master it by means of the charm.



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# PLATE SEVENTEEN

## The Conquering of the Demon "Time."

Here an early teacher of the Ning-ma-pa sect, holding the ceremonial dagger that is a carry-over from the ancient Bon sacrificial ritual, his gown flowing to the wind, conjures up by means of his magic meditation Maha-

Finally Na Ro Pa is compelled by his teacher to take a wife. He marries a princess, and the two of them go about killing living beings in order to make them sky-wanderers, so to free them from their earthly envelope so they may attain liberation or nirvana. Eventually the two decide to become sky-wanderers themselves, so they build a pyre and burn themselves together. After three days the people watching the pyre still see the two dancing in rainbow colors in the smoke of the fire.

After this Na Ro Pa is reborn as a small child, sitting somewhere by the wayside, playing with sand. He has been reincarnated. Na Ro Pa's successor and student was Marpa, the translator. He was originally a merchant who went to India in search of wealth and having found it, returned to Tibet. He went to India a second time in search of a teacher, found the reincarnated Na Ro Pa, and so gained enlightenment. On a third trip he went in search of books, and returned with original Buddhist sermons and philosophic commentaries, which he translated into Tibetan, in a further effort to bring Buddhism to Tibet. He is one of the last great Tibetan translators, and finished what is known as the Tripitaka, or Tibetan Buddhist scripts. A complete Tripitaka comes in thousands of volumes, bundled into 330 big heaps.

Marpa's student Milarepa is particularly famous as a poet. He went through as many difficulties studying with Marpa as Na Ro Pa did with Tilopa. In Tibetan iconography Milarepa is always shown supporting his head with his left hand and listening to voices from the ether, while he sits in a cave. He has left many beautiful scriptures that have been published, and to those who wish to delve deeper into Tibetan studies, the four volumes of Evans-Wentz are

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kala, the god of time. The god appears in the gigantic and overpowering form of a rock, surmounted by the learned scholar of Mahakala, holding a book.

The offerings, visible on the square altar on the right, have proved effective; and the four disciples on the left, sharing in the terrifying apparition, cry out in wonderment.

Forms of Yamantaka, who can be pictured in numerous ways, appear in the other corners.

It is this power over gods and spirits that has given to the Tibetan sorcerers their fearful reputation, as indicated by many legends. The inscriptions written on the print give the Tibetan names of the Divinities shown.

recommended: *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*; *The Great Yogi Milarepa*; *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*; and *The Great Liberation*, containing the life story and recorded teachings of the great Guru Rimpoche.

In a Tibetan text, corrupted by Mme Blavatsky, we may read, "The mind is the great slayer of the real. Let the disciple slay the slayer." This saying applies as much to Bon as it does to Buddhism. One may read that in Tibet one sees Buddhism pushed to the farthest extreme it can reach, as though there were only one extreme to anything. Often, one may also read that Tibet exhibits all the evils of a theocratic state. But Tibet is a very special country, where there exists a very specific set of conditions, well-nigh unique in the world. Within its own frame of reference, it is far from being a poor country, and its culture is thoroughly indigenous. Within its own boundaries, a state can be evil only when it is imposed on the people without their consent, and when it thwarts their needs and their desires. It is quite true that Tibet is a theocracy. But it is a theocracy at the service of the five million theocrats who make up its population. It is neither profitable nor illuminating to criticize a self-contained system in terms of values that are not inherent in it.

## 15. ZOROASTRIANISM

AT THE BOTTOM OF ALL RELIGIONS WE HAVE FOUND A BASIC dualism. This condition arises because the absolute validity of everyday phenomenal life becomes doubtful when we experience the impact of what might be called the light, or vision of the Being of Being, which changes the entire nature of ordinary existence from something of prime to something of inferior importance. This experience can be so shocking, thrilling, and immediate that it renders ordinary consciousness unimportant, petty, painful, and a thing that must be overcome in order that we may maintain our insight into the Ultimate, which makes all other things seem shadowy nonentities.

We have seen that this feeling stands somewhere at the beginning of every one of the great religions, though it usually fades out in the later stages. The later development of a faith does not normally retain its dualistic origin, for somehow a bridge is constructed between ordinary or shadow existence and the Being of Being that projects that existence. We find in monistic or mystical systems a clear attempt to overcome the divergence and to reconcile the two.

Although we have in everyday life a tremendous difference between what is positive and what is negative, what is real and non-real, we tend to claim that this difference is more of an appearance than a reality. We project backwards our wish that it should not exist, to abolish the divergence by redefining its point of origin. So we say that in the beginning there was a totality that split in half, and that eventually the two halves will form a totality again.

Almost all human intellectual movements tend to come full circle, not in a closed circuit, but in a spiral, so that we reach the same position, but not in the same place. We can see this process extensively operative in China. In the beginning yang and yin probably

meant not only the male-female, expanding-contracting, dry-wet oppositions, but also the characteristics of true being, or the Being of Being, and of that which was derived, or negative. In later philosophical consideration, as in the *Tao te King*, yang and yin are inseparable and polar, rather than contradictory, so that only their co-existence builds up a desirable state or condition. To the religious mind, the indivisible may have more than one aspect; and a plurality of things may be the whole. The difference between the two is chiefly in point of view.

As we look at Buddhism in India, we first discover the tremendous difference between nirvana and samsara, nirvana standing for what is ultimate and unnameable, samsara for what is phenomenal, negative, and built on illusion. But in Mahayana Buddhism, we find an effort to overcome this positive and negative opposition that culminates in the abstract formulations of Nagarjuna, who assures us that there is no difference between samsara and nirvana. The same process occurs in Hinduism. At the beginning, Vishnu, God of extension and space; and Brahma, who inhales and exhales the universe, are strongly opposed to Rudra-Siva, the destructive principle; but later we find the three joined in a trinity, so that Siva, the destructive element, is seen to be as gracious, necessary, and powerful as Brahma, the creator, because creation cannot exist without destruction of the previously created, any more than a garden can exist without weeding. We deal with the systole and diastole of the world heart, in short, or with the Hegelian synthesis.

Equally, Christianity commences with a strong duality between heaven and hell, positive and negative reality, God and the Devil; but in the early centuries, for example in Origen, you find these differences ultimately overcome to give what, in patristic terms, is called "the bringing home of all to the one." And as we have seen in Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, the ultimate Divine, or numen, is always realized by Man in two ways; as the fascinating power with positive attributes, and at the same time as a tremendous power with negative attributes; yet ultimately both are one. The only difference lies in the approach or perspective by means of which Man perceives the Divine.

In modern psychology, also, we find that the idea of any kind of strict, strong opposition is frowned upon as a dangerous thing, and that we should not try to enhance a split consciousness by deciding

that certain things are desirable or positive at the expense of repressing certain others that are neither. If there is a shadow, the shadow is necessary and not to be abandoned: the demonic part of the personality must also have its due room.

The true devil of modern psychologists is not the devil who stands in opposition to God, but St. Michael, who tries to destroy completely the negative or dragon side of the personality. The repressive act is seen to be more dangerous than the aggressive act.

There is one great exception in the history of religion to this dualistic battle between positive and negative forces that is eventually resolved as the two aspects of one thing, and this is the religion of Zarathustra, which survives today among the Parsis of Bombay, together with the various sects that derive from it.

If we were to draw a schematic map of Zoroastrianism we would get something totally different from any pattern we might have adduced from other religions. For though there was originally, in Zoroastrianism, a complete distinction between positive and negative, the two have so intermingled that today it is scarcely possible to distinguish what is good and what is bad. It is the hope of Zoroastrianism that with time, and partly through the effort and cooperation of Man, the state of complete separation may be eventually re-achieved, and that the light and dark, the positive and negative, may once more be clearly located on opposed sides of the universe. To attempt this reversal is to turn the process of most religions inside out.

At the beginning both these Mentalities became conscious of each other,

The one being a Mentality better in thought, and word, and deed, than the other Mentality who is bad.

Now let the just man discriminate between these two, and choose the benevolent one, not the bad one.<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt illustrates the basic moral situation of Zoroastrianism. Most religions claim that mankind had an original state of goodness, or that such goodness existed. From this state Man fell, or else he was beneath it, and the object of his efforts is either to regain this original state, or to rise above himself and become united with it. Zoroastrianism believes in an original separation that has been aban-

<sup>1</sup> K. S. Cuthrie, trans., *The Hymns of Zoroaster* (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1914).



doned, but that will have to be re-established. Most religions believe that some sort of salvation is offered to Man, if he will conform to certain requirements. Zoroastrianism believes that Man must work actively with God, in order to save both himself and Him.

As to who Zarathustra was, that is a two-fold problem. The name derives from the ancient Persian, or Bactrian language. It seems certain that Zoroaster must have been an historical personage to whom are attributed the songs and statements that have descended in his name. As an historical personage, he dates roughly from the first part of the first millennium *a.c.* But on second glance he is clearly a legendary figure, to the same degree that the Buddha became and Lao Tse was one. It is difficult to sort out the historical and the mythological elements in his story.

Myth tells us a great deal about his birth and about events that occurred before his birth. In fact, to the Zoroastrian, there was not one Zarathustra, but many, just as, in Mahayana myth, there was not one Buddha, but innumerable ones throughout the ages, one for each creation of the world. So we are told that the original Zarathustra took a bath in a lake and lost his sperm in the water, and therefore every time a virgin bathes in this lake she becomes pregnant by the original Zarathustra and so gives birth to another one of the incarnations of the prophet.

The Divine nature of his conception and of his parturition are exactly what we would expect, since as we have learned no divine child can ever be the son of an earthly father. When the so-called historical Zarathustra was born, anywhere from 1000 to 600 *a.c.*, for scholars are not agreed, he was an uncommonly sturdy child, and he had to be, for the demon world instantly rose up against him, in order not to be conquered by him, and he had to combat snakes and other manifestations of evil somewhat in the manner of the infant Hercules. It is said that he did not cry when he was born, but laughed loudly:

One marvel is this which is declared, that on being born he laughed outright; the seven midwives, who sat around him, were quite frightened thereby, and those terrified ones spoke thus: "What was this, on account of grandeur or contempt? When, like the worthy man whose pleasure is due to activity, the man's child so laughs at the birth owing to him."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. V, p. 35.

In short, he saw life in a positive way. We are told that he remained silent for seven years, that he remained a desert hermit for twenty, and that (and this has the smack of historical truth) when he was 77 he was killed during the surrender of a town to a besieging army. Even more likely to be true is the statement that he had difficulties with his family, a far from commendable situation that his worshippers would not have transmitted, unless there was some truth in it; though we must remember that it is the pattern of great inspirational mystics to estrange themselves from their families as a prime condition of detachment, and that the denial, in one form or another, of the power of the mother is one of the conditions that most such leaders conform to. Zarathustra never calls himself the founder of a religion, but a reformer, as did Lao Tse and Kung Tse. Again, we can draw certain conclusions about the religion that preceded Zarathustra from the form that Zoroastrianism subsequently took. These hypotheses are developed in conformity with the rule whereby religions eventually take on something of the form of the religion that they supplant, since the prophet himself influences only the upper layer of human consciousness and society. He rarely alters the course of the primitive mass consciousness with which the faith founded by him must come to terms by making concessions, if it is to maintain its following.

Iranian religion predates Zarathustra. In many respects, probably because they came from the same racial stream, the ancient sources of Iranian faith are similar to the Indian traditions of the *Vedas*. The basic premise is that Man finds his deathlessness in the continuity of the generations; and from this original concept various others build up, just as we find in India, but there they are adjusted to different social conditions.

The oldest songs of the sacred *Avesta*, the holy book of the Persians, are composed in a language, Iranian or Old Bactrian, which is closely allied to ancient Sanskrit. The two peoples were offshoots of the same invading Aryan stream. Part of the highlands of Persia, which today constitute Afghanistan, are called by their inhabitants Aryana, to indicate that their racial heritage derives from the Aryan invaders.

The system of Zarathustra, which is in part recorded in the sections of the *Avesta* called the Gathas, is part of this complex of ideas, gatha being the Iranian equivalent of the Sanskrit gita or song, as in

*Bhagavadgita*. In these songs Zarathustra presents us with a perfect dualistic system, a split extending through all realms of reality, from God on down:

Now will I speak out: At the beginning of life  
 The holier Mentality said to the opposing Mentality who was more  
 hostile,  
 "Neither our thoughts, doctrines, plans,  
 Beliefs, utterances, deeds,  
 Individualities, nor souls agree."<sup>3</sup>

Ahura Masdao, the god of light, is opposed by and equal with Angra Mainyu, the poison spirit of darkness. Angra Mainyu is referred to later on, in western scriptures, as Ahriman, the devil. Just as the Divine is equally divided, so is the temporal. So there are two sorts of people who have absolutely nothing to do with each other, those who follow the light, or Ahura Masdao, and those who follow and worship and thereby equally enhance the negative principle: Ahriman.

In the *Zendavesta*, for example, we learn of the sixteen perfect lands that Ahura Masdao created, each one of which was paralleled and opposed by a land created by Ahriman, as for example:

The fifth of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was Nisaya, that lies between Mouru and Bakhdi.  
 Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created the sin of unbelief.  
 The sixth of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the house-deserting Haroyu.  
 Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created tears and wailing.<sup>4</sup>

Among other things, Ahriman counter-created winter, the locust, plunder, sin, ants and ant-hills, pride, unnatural sin, the burying of the dead (Zoroastrians practice exposure), witchcraft, cremation, monstrous births, and excessive heat.

We may now ask what the difference is between these two more or less evenly-balanced realms; what is it that we must flee in order not to fall into the error of becoming worshippers of Ahriman; and the answer is in the nature of the division that goes through the entire material universe. There are elements in nature that belong to the god of light, and elements that belong to the devil, or god of

<sup>3</sup> *The Hymns of Zoroaster*.

<sup>4</sup> "The Vendidad," Chap. I, in *Sacred Books of the East*.

darkness. The earliest historical expression of this division we may find in the difference between the mutually hostile but brother tribes that dwelt on the high Iranian plateau and the others that descended into India. It is not to be stated positively that this sociological fact is the basis of Zarathustra's dualism, but rather that the quarrels between the two groups were seen as the first earthly expression of the ultimate split that was seen to exist in all life. We are faced with a definite religious experience of the *fascinosum* and the *tremendum*, the yes and no; that to which we are attracted and that which repels us, reflected in the split between the tribes. This split had its reflection in language. Thus Ahura Masdao, the great positive spirit, corresponds to the Vedic word Asura, the Vedic "s" corresponding to the Persian "h." But Asuras are terrible gods, or demons, to be destroyed by devas, or positive gods. The word deva, slightly changed into daiva, exists in the Iranian language, but there it means demon. In other words, the gods of your hostile neighbors become your devils; and the things that bedevil them are acceptable to you as examples of divine intervention, so that the two concepts become exactly switched around. We find the same process going on in the Old Testament, in the term Baal.

Another example of the same linguistic and racial stock is in the intoxicating drink imbibed by the devas and their worshippers in the Vedic hymns, the soma. In Avestic religion it becomes haoma.

Besides the god of light and the god of dark, the system of Zarathustra has many inferior angelic beings, thus creating an entire pantheon. There are angels who are called good thinking, and others who are called bad thinking, and the two groups are about evenly balanced. Truth, as a personified power, stands against personified lying; humility against hypocrisy; amaretat (the same word as the Vedic amrta) stands against the power of death; and justice against wrath. These strangely-named angels are abstract hypostases, expressions in which the ideas and feelings of Man are raised to the status of personalities, personifications of the vices and virtues. They are like allegories, as in the later Roman Republic you have such abstract deities as the Goddess Fortuna, or such Greek concepts as the Three Graces or the Nine Muses.

In primitive times there was no such goddess as Fortuna. But with the passage of time she concretized, because there was need of her. In a similar way the personifications of abstract ideas presented by

the Zarathustrian system show a late state of speculative development. Originally his system was far more concrete, and the actual opponents who fight each other through the visible universe are, first of all, the cattle and the wolf. The holy cow is the creation of Ahura Masdao, the light god. The wolf, in destroying cattle, is the creature of Ahriman, or the devil. In the figure of the dog, looked upon as a domesticated wolf, is the example of the great triumph of Man, who can by his own efforts convert a demon creature to the service of the good god:

Of the dog they say that out of the star station, that is, away from the direction of the constellation Haptok-ring, was given to him further by a stage than to men, on account of his protection of sheep, and as associating with sheep and men; for this the dog is purposely adapted, as three more kinds of advantage are given to him than to man: he has his own boots, his own clothing, and may wander about without self-exertion.<sup>5</sup>

. . . "I, Ahura, Mazdao, have made the dog strong of body against the evil-doer, when sound of mind and watchful over your goods."<sup>6</sup>

The good, or shepherd dog, is contrasted with the evil, or wild dog, and it behooves Man to take great care of the shepherd dog, who has the character of a priest, a warrior, a husbandman, a strolling singer, a thief, a courtesan, and a child. He is employed as an example of the mixture of good and evil in men, and as a parable, in his traits, of human society. He is in some measure sacred. This belief is understandable enough in a shepherd people, dependent upon the training of their dogs for much of their security and livelihood.

On the side of the good god of light stands the element of fire, which frightens off prowling beasts. The Persians have been known as fire worshippers from remote antiquity. Probably the prototypical fire worship did not consist in lighting a fire and offering up hymns, but in burning the creatures of Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman; such creatures as snakes, lizards, and other animals.

Metal, which must be forged in fire, and was a recent discovery of Man, was seen as a creation of the good light god, and given to Man for his use. Rust, in destroying metal, was the creature of Angra Mainyu. It is interesting that in this practical dualism we find nowhere mention of the dualism that has always both plagued and

<sup>5</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XVIII.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

fascinated western philosophy, the dualism of mind and body. It is known in Persian philosophy, but it is not conceived to be an absolute duality, but to be interwoven and mixed, so that the good exists both mentally and corporeally, as does the evil.

Eventually the balance of good and evil will work itself out, for one hopes that more warriors are going to step to the side of Ahura Masdao than to the side of Ahriman. The idea is similar to the Nordic one found in the *Edda* and the *Nibelungenlied*, where we learn that the gods, led by Wotan, assemble all the warriors who died on the battlefield at a feast in Valhalla, to await the day when the demons of the underworld attempt to defeat the gods. If enough dead and valiant warriors are on the side of the good gods, then victory is assured. The legend may even be racially interconnected. It is up to Man, in his acts, to choose sides.

According to Zarathustra, this battle is being waged right now, in everything that happens in this world, in every word that is spoken and every action in which we engage. Every lie is a small victory for Angra Mainyu, and every truth one for Ahura Masdao. Nothing is too trifling to weigh in the scales. Every act, therefore, has a religious significance, a viewpoint that has presented a problem to Christian ethics, which has never definitely decided whether everything is of importance as a moral act, or whether there are negligible things where a moral decision is unnecessary and irrelevant.

To the Zoroastrian all acts, even down to the cutting of the hair, are important, since they weigh the scale one way or another, in favor of darkness or of light. In addition, the Zoroastrian system has an elaborate doctrine concerned with final events. It is a confused and self-contradictory doctrine, just as our own ideas of what happens after death are composed of irreconcilable elements: certain passages of the New Testament inform us that the dead are in heaven, although other passages tell us that they are asleep and will be sorted at the day of the Last Judgment. As materialists we believe the dead are gone forever; as sentimentalists, we honor the dead as though they knew they were being honored. We have several attitudes towards the dead.

The Zoroastrians have three. One is that every soul has to cross the Chinvat Bridge, which has the habit of turning its sharp edge upward whenever a bad soul, or follower of Angra Mainyu, ap-



proaches it, so that the bad soul is cut in two and falls into the abyss on either side of the knife-bridge.

Moreover, the bridge becomes a broad bridge for the righteous, as much as the height of nine spears; . . . and it becomes a narrow bridge for the wicked, even unto a resemblance to the edge of a razor.<sup>7</sup>

The second theory is that in some way all souls get across the Chinvat bridge, but that on the other side the good soul is to be met by the counterpart it has created on the other side, a companion created out of one's good actions; whereas the bad soul, instead of being met by a beautiful girl, will be met by a witch, who is also the creation of mortal acts. The third theory is that of an ultimate catastrophe in which a stream of fiery molten metal will pour over the earth, painfully burning the followers of Angra Mainyu, but it will appear to the followers of Ahura Masdao as a lukewarm bath of milk spiced with honey, in which they will all take their pleasure:

Then all men will pass into that melted metal and will become pure; when one is righteous, then it seems to him just as though he walks continually in warm milk; but when wicked, then it seems to him in such a manner as though, in the world, he walks continually in melted metal.<sup>8</sup>

In any event, a final battle will take place between the forces of good and evil, and the outcome of this battle remains in doubt. The decision is up to all of us, insofar as we align ourselves with the force of light or the demon of darkness; in this battle, Man, according to Zarathustra, is not the passive object of salvation, but an active participant with God, a co-fighter in the army of God upon whose diligence and decision depends the outcome of the final cosmological and indeed metaphysical battle.

The Pahlavi texts contain a summary of the virtues that will be of assistance in this battle:

Of those five dispositions the first is innocence.

The second is discrimination among thoughts, words, and deeds; to fully distinguish the particulars of destruction from indestructiveness, such as noxious creatures from cattle; and of production from unproductiveness, such as the righteous and worthy from the wicked and unworthy.

The third is authoritativeness, because that priestly matter is always wiser and speaking more correctly who is taught wisely and teaches with more correct words.

The fourth is to understand and consider the ceremonial as the cere-

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

monial of Ahura Mazda, and the essentials with all goodness, beneficence, and authority; to be steadfast in his religion, and to consider the indications of protection which are established for his religion. To maintain the reverence of the luminaries prayerfully, also the reverence of the emanations from the six archangels, be they fire, be they earth, or be they of bodily form, and of the creatures which are formed by them; also the pure cleansing from dead matter, menstruation, bodily refuse, and other hurtfulness; this is in order that they may be characterized, and thereby constituted, as better-principled, more sensible, and purer, and they may become less faulty. The reverence of mankind is to consider authoritatively about knowledge and property; the reverence of cattle is about fodder, little hardship, and moderate maintenance; the reverence of plants is about sowing and ripening for the food of the worthy. The ceremonial which is glorifying all the sacred beings, praises the luminaries and wordly creations improperly, and is antagonistic to them, because complete glorification is proper through complete recitation of the ritual; and the ceremonial of any one whatever is his own proper duty professionally, so long as it is possible to keep proceeding with very little sinfulness.

The fifth is to struggle prayerfully, day and night, with your own fiend, and all life long not to depart from steadfastness, nor allow your proper duty to go out of your hands.<sup>9</sup>

These five principles apply to the priesthood. They are followed by ten admonitions applicable to all religious instruction:

And the first of those ten admonitions is to proceed with good repute, for the sake of occasioning approving remarks as to the good repute of your own guardian and teacher, high-priest and master.

The second is to become awfully refraining from evil repute, for the sake of evil repute not occurring to relations and guardians.

The third is not to beat your own teacher with a snatched-up stick, and not to bring scandal upon his name, for the sake of annoying him, by uttering that which was not heard from your own teacher.

The fourth is that whatever is taught liberally by your own teacher, you have to deliver back to the worthy, for the sake of not extorting a declaration of renown from the righteous.

The fifth is that the reward of doers of good works and the punishment of criminals have to be established by law, for the sake of progress.

The sixth is to keep the way of the good open to your house, for the sake of making righteousness welcome in your own abode.

The seventh is that, for the sake of not developing the fiend insensibly in your reason, you are not to keep it with the religion of the good, nor to remain in impenitence of sin.

The eighth is that, for the sake of severing the fiend from the reason, you have to force malice away from your thoughts, and to become quickly repentant of sin.

<sup>9</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLVII, pp. 167-170.

The ninth is fully to understand the forward movement of the religion, also to keep the advancing of the religion further forwards, and to seek your share of duty therein; and on a backward movement, when adversity happens to the religion, to have the religion back again, and to keep your body in the continence of religion.

The tenth is that there is to be a period of obedience towards the ruler and priestly authority, the high-priesthood of the religious.<sup>10</sup>

Though designed for priests, this set of laws applies in general to all Parsis, or followers of Zarathustra.

The basic and somewhat unusual idea that Man may decide the course of divine events has been quite important at various times in the history of religion. It has been postulated that the ancient Chinese philosophy of yang and yin might be derived from the Persian; a concept that is by no means impossible, since the Chinese maintained a much more lively intercourse with North India, Persia, and the Asian Greek kingdoms than has commonly been supposed. The Parsis, or followers of Zarathustra, who fled from the Moham-medan invasion of Persia in the 8th century and lodged in the region of Bombay, exert an influence out of all proportion to their numbers, because they are extremely well-educated and, being very rich, also much given to charitable works.

More important for the western tradition, the Persian religion had an enormous impact at the time of the later history of Babylonia and through the Babylonian exile (ended 538 B.C.), upon the Jews, who during the Captivity learned at least two things; the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the doctrine of the devil, neither of which is to be found in Jewish texts predating the Captivity. Both these doctrines find their way into the Christian religion, and also into the religion of Mani. The Christians had great difficulty in suppressing Manichaeism, and never succeeded in suppressing its ideas, for they survive in the western world as a powerful, ineradicable undertow. In addition to this influence the Greek rulers of the Dada-dochi, the kingdoms set up in the Near East after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., adopted the Persian religion. And Mithraism, whose god Mithra was admitted to the Zoroastrian pantheon, and whose ideas were founded upon Zoroastrianism, was another strong contender with Christianity for control of the western world, which it entered about 100 A.D.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

## 16.

ISLAM AND  
SUFISM

HAVING SURVEYED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIGENOUS religions of the Orient, we must now backtrack in time and consider the faiths, stemming from Zoroastrianism, that arose in Persia, Arabia, and the southeastern Levant, and influenced both Christianity and the Oriental world. Of these the most widespread and the most successful was Islam. It was the last of the great modern religions to develop, and its short history does much to explain its synthetic character. It is unique, or virtually unique, among these religions, since it was created more or less by one man, and that man, Mohammed, was extremely accomplished and learned.

Mohammed was born in Mekka in 570 A.D., the son of a member of a tribe of shepherds and traders. He traveled widely, and in Syria and Palestine came into contact with both Jews and Christians. But it was not until 622, following his flight to Medinah, when he was 52, that the religion he syncretized from Old Testament Jewish texts, New Testament Christian doctrine, and Zoroastrianism began to root itself firmly.

It is important to remember that Mohammed was not only a religious leader, but became, by means of his religion, a political leader as well, and one who was both astute and powerful.

If we can be certain of anything, it is that the Koran, the essential Islamic text, is entirely his composition; and in it he undoubtedly attempted to establish an all-embracing and universal faith. From Judaism he accepted the concept of the stern patriarchal god Jehovah, calling him Allah in Arabic. He rules his people firmly and is chiefly evident from his effect on their history. From Christianity he adapted the ethics preached by Jesus or attributed to him; and from both he took the idea of monotheism. He disagrees with Christianity principally in denying that Jesus is the son of God, for to Mohammed, though religion is full of great prophets, God never assumes a human shape. Mohammedanism differs from Christian-

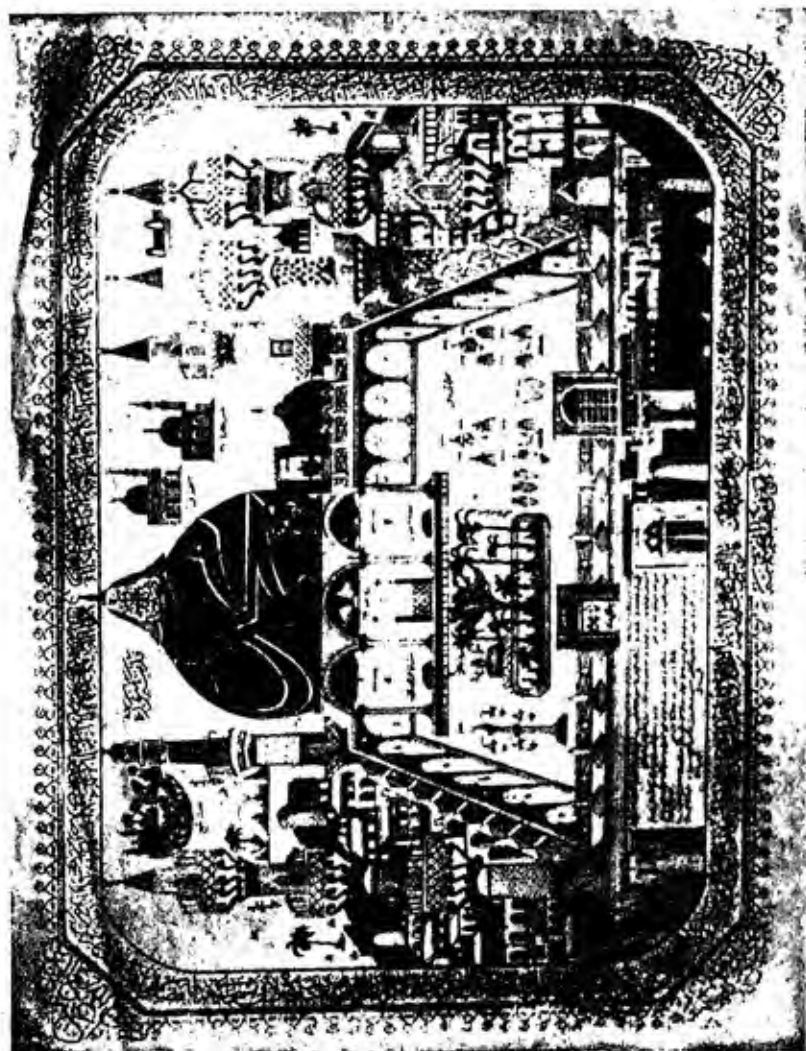


PLATE EIGHTEEN

The mosque of the tomb of Mohammed, surrounded by the mausoleums of various other leading personalities of Moslem history. At the upper left is a small oasis with a lake surrounded by palms. In Arab belief, the palm is the closest earthly symbol for paradise, for it is the tree that both feeds and shelters him. Nor is it dissimilar to the topknot left on the shaven head, by which the soul is yanked up to Heaven and so saved.

ity chiefly in that no incarnation of God is possible; and from Hinduism in that no avatar is either possible or permissible.

When in the 7th century Mohammed enunciated his creed, he did so to a society existing in a state of primitive consciousness; and one whose environment—suns scorched, storm-wracked, and unproductive—was an arduous one. The people who wandered over this land were a savage people united only by tribal alliance, and had no highly-developed system of ethics, social integration, or cultural expression. Mohammed understood them thoroughly, adapted his religion accordingly, and in the space of his lifetime united and transformed these vagrant peoples into an empire, chiefly by forcing them to accept a common loyalty not to the tribe or an individual, but to a national religious community. This was a nation in the Jewish sense of a group of people, rather than of a group of people in a specific geographical area. The transformation was unique; the only empire in history to be totally rooted in a religion. In Islam religion created an empire; in Christianity, an empire adopted a faith and called itself The Holy Roman Empire, which, as the old saw goes, was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire. Whether led by Arabs, Persians, or in later times the Turks, Islam remained essentially all three, a portable theocratic state, much of whose impetus came from the fact that it *was* portable.

Mohammed established a monopolism that uprooted, and was designed to uproot, all the local deities of a hundred tribes. The chief reason for the stern iconoclasm of Islam was precisely to destroy the memory of these tribal gods by destroying them. Such a monopolism was Mohammed's unique contribution to religion, for Judaism was not monopolism, but the faith of a Chosen People, who felt themselves more likely to be saved than their neighbors; whereas Christianity had both God and Jesus to deal with. In Islam, which derives from both, there is definitely but one God and one God only who never takes human or any other shape, and who never splits his functions, and who is God of all mankind. Mohammed is His prophet, to be sure, but Mohammed is not divine, but emphatically human.

What is divine in Islam, apart from God, is the Holy Book, or Koran, which is much more literally the word of God than is the Christian Bible. The Bible, in general, reports the words of God. The Koran, however, is the actual words of God as they were



transmitted to the Prophet Mohammed by the Archangel Gabriel, in the same sense that the Angel Moroni presented the *Book of Mormon* to Brigham Young, who was then divinely inspired to find it buried in a field:

The sending down of the Book from God, the mighty, the wise.

Verily, we have sent down to thee the Book in truth, then serve God, being sincere in religion unto Him. Ayel God's is the sincere religion: and those who take beside Him patrons—We do not serve them save that they may bring us near to God.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the Koran, Islam also has the Sunna, the non-divine, non-revealed life of the Prophet; and the Hadith, or sayings of the Prophet collected at some time after his death. Thus we have the Divine words of God; a manual of the life of Mohammed, which is not divine, but establishes a precedent for correct behavior; and a book of wisdom, which is practical. For the astonishing thing about the Prophet is not his wisdom, his holiness, or even his political genius, but his truly astounding realism and common sense. The astonishing and almost immediate success of Mohammed can be traced to the fact that, almost alone among the world's reformers, he based his system not upon the good that people ought to achieve, but upon what they could and would achieve in the light of their desires, habits, customs, wishes, abilities, and limitations. He knew the race with which he had to deal, as can be seen in his regulation of the problems of sex.

The western world has criticized him for 1,200 years for having permitted Moslems to indulge in polygamy to the extent of allowing them four wives, and for tolerance in other matters. But it was Mohammed's desire to regulate the excess by permitting the indulgence, rather than to make excess inevitable by forbidding a reasonable moderation. Before the time of the Prophet, in Arabia as in ancient Judea, men were allowed as many wives and concubines as they could afford. By limiting the number to four, Mohammed cut down on undue excess and yet allowed an adequate legal outlet for the passions, provided as well for the household functions, and in addition provided a safe margin for future conduct, since few Arabs could afford the luxury of four wives. In short, by keeping his laws within the demands, needs, and condition of the tribesmen with whom he had to deal, he assured that

<sup>1</sup> Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. IX (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1880), p. 182.

no law could be broken by common consent, and thus with impunity. In this act he was wise, for if one law can be broken with impunity, the transgressor will soon be able to doubt the validity of the entire system. By the exercise of common sense, Mohammed made it probable that the laws he promulgated would not be broken, by making it possible for them to be kept. In this respect his divorce laws were an admirable contrivance:

Those who swear off from their women, they must wait four months; but if they break their vow God is forgiving and merciful.

And if they intend to divorce them, verily, God hears and knows.

Divorced women must wait for themselves three courses; and it is not lawful to them that they hide what God has created in their wombs, if they believe in God and in the last day. Their husbands will do better to take them back in that (*case*) if they wish for reconciliation; for, the same is due to them as from them; but the men should have precedence over them. God is mighty and wise.

Divorce (*may happen*) twice; then keep them in reason, or let them go with kindness. It is not lawful for you to take from them anything of what you have given them, unless both fear that they cannot keep within God's bounds there is no crime in you both about what she ransoms herself with. These are God's bounds, do not transgress them; and whoso transgresses God's bounds, they it is who are unjust.

But if he divorce her (*a third time*) she shall not be lawful to him after that, until she marry another husband; but if he divorce her too, it is no crime in them both to come together again, if they think that they can keep within God's bounds. These are God's bounds which He explains to a people who know.

When ye divorce women, and they have reached the prescribed time, then keep them kindly, or let them go in reason, but do not keep them by force to transgress; for whoso does that, he is unjust to his own soul; and do not take God's signs in jest; and remember God's favours to you, and what He has sent down to you of the Book of wisdom, to admonish you thereby; and fear God, and know that God doth all things know.

When ye divorce women, and they have reached their prescribed term, do not prevent them from marrying their (*fresh*) husbands, when they have agreed with each other reasonably. That is what he is admonished with who amongst you believes in God and in the last day. That is more pure for you and cleaner. But God knows, and ye know not.<sup>2</sup>

This system is eminently rational and judicial. Mohammed wisely created a code that could be broken only with undue effort, rather than kept only by undue exertion. Provision was also made for indulgence outside the marriage bond.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-35.

To understand the basic tenets and attitudes of Islam, we can scarcely do better than to quote from *The Forty-Two Traditions of An-Nawawi*, at some length, for it is a classic digest of Islamic principles:

1. Actions are to be judged only in accordance with intentions; and every one gets only what he intended. . . .

2. . . . And the apostle of Allah said to him, "Islam is that you should give witness that there is no deity except Allah, and that Mohammed is the apostle of Allah; and you should perform the prayer ceremony, and give alms, and fast in Ramadhan; and pilgrimage to the house if you can manage it." . . . "You should believe in Allah and his angels and his books and his apostles and in the last day and in predestination (both good and evil)." . . . "You should worship Allah, as if you saw him; for although you do not see him, he sees you." . . .

3. Islam is built on five points:—the witness of there being no deity except Allah, and of Mohammed being the apostle of Allah; the performing of prayer; the giving of alms; the pilgrimage to the house; and the fast of Ramadhan.

6. What is lawful is obvious, and what is unlawful is obvious; and between them are matters which are ambiguous and of which many people are ignorant. Hence, he who is careful in regard to the ambiguous has justified himself in regard to his religion and his honour; but he who stumbles in the ambiguous has stumbled in the forbidden, as the shepherd pasturing around the forbidden land is on the verge of pasturing in it: it is not that every king of the Arabs had protected land, and is not the protected land of Allah that which he has forbidden?

7. Religion is good advice. . . . "Allah's and His Book's and His apostle's and the Imams of the Muslims, and the generality of them."

8. I have been commanded to wage war upon people until they witness that there is no deity except Allah, and that Mohammed is the apostle of Allah; and that they perform the prayer and give alms. Then if they do that, so far as I am concerned, their lives and property will be protected, unless in conflict with the rights of Islam; and their account is with Allah Ta'ala.

9. What I have forbidden you, avoid; and what I have ordered you, comply with to the utmost of your ability; . . .

11. Let go the things in which you are in doubt for the things in which there is no doubt.

12. Leaving alone things which do not concern him is one of the good things in a man's Islam.

13. No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.

14. The blood of a Muslim man is not lawful but for one of three reasons:—an adulterous married person; an avenger of blood; and the one who leaves his religion, that is, splits the community.

17. Allah has prescribed Ihsan for everything; hence, if you kill, do it well; and if you slaughter, do it well; and let each one of you sharpen his knife and let his victim die at once.

18. Fear Allah, wherever thou art, and follow up bad actions with good, so as to wipe them out; and behave in a decent way to people.

20. Among the things which people comprehended from the material of the first prophecy was, If you are not ashamed, then do whatever you wish.

22. A man asked the apostle of Allah and said; "Is it your opinion that, if I pray the prescribed prayers; and fast in Ramadhan; and believe firmly in what is allowable; and shun what is forbidden, and do not do anything more than that, I shall enter the garden?" He said, "Yes."

23. . . . the Koran is an argument in your favour or against you; and everyone goes about his business at the beginning of the day and sells his soul; he either frees it or causes it to perish.

24. . . . O my servants, every one of you is in error, except the one I have guided, so ask guidance from me and I will guide you. . . .

O my servants, you sin day and night; and I pardon your sins; so ask pardon of me and I will pardon you. . . .

O my servants, it is only your works that I take account of for you; then I recompense you for them; and he who finds good, let him praise Allah; and he who finds otherwise, let him blame himself alone.

26. Almsgiving is incumbent upon every "bone" of people each day that the sun rises; it is almsgiving if you make adjustment between a couple; and if you help a man in the matter of his riding-animal and mount him upon her or lift his baggage for him upon her. A good word is almsgiving; and in every step you walk towards prayer there is an act of almsgiving; and it is almsgiving when you ward danger off the road.

27. Righteousness is goodness of character; and sinfulness is what is woven in the soul, and you hate that people should ascertain the matter. . . .

28. . . . beware of novel affairs, for surely all innovation is error.

31. "Be abstemious in the world, and Allah will love you; and be abstemious in what belongs to people, and people will love you."

34. Whoever of you sees something of which Allah disapproves, then let him change it with his hand; and if that is impossible, then with his tongue; and if that is impossible, then with his heart; and that is faith of the weakest kind.

36. He who dispels from a believer one of the griefs of the world, Allah will dispel for him a grief on the day of resurrection. . . . and the one whose work makes him procrastinate will not be hastened along by the nobility of his ancestry.

40. Be in the world as if you were a stranger or a traveller: when evening time comes, expect not the morning; and when morning time comes expect not the evening; and prepare as long as you are in good health for sickness, and so long as you are alive for death.

42. Allah Ta'ala said: "So long as you call upon me and hope in me,

I forgive you all that originates from you; and I will not heed, O son of man, should your sins reach the horizon of the heavens, and then you asked my pardon and I would pardon you. O son of Man, were you to come to me with almost an earth-ful of sins, and then you met me without joining anything with me in the godhead, then would I come to you with an earth-ful of forgiveness."<sup>3</sup>

This excerpt, of course, is part of a later reduction or summary of Islam, dating from the 14th century, whereas the Koran belongs to the first third of the 7th century A.D. It has the advantage, however, of dealing with the moral content of that work without including the minutiae of its specific prohibitions and recommendations. For the Koran is an extremely specific document, dealing in detail with everything from ethical conduct to social and even dietetic rules and regulations. Neither in the digest nor in the Koran itself is much to be discovered about the nature of God. Certainly there is nothing equivalent to the abstract Indian arguments about the unstateability and unknowability of the nature of God. For this difference there are two reasons, both stemming from the same cause. Unlike other basic religious documents, the Koran is the work of one man. Thus it is specifically stated that God exists but cannot be portrayed or envisioned, and the rest of the religious argument proceeds from that given point. Second, the Hindus, who had inherited centuries of accumulated specific deities, had to clear them away and rationalize them, in order to establish the ineffable nature of the Being of Being, whereas Mohammed, taking that ineffability for granted, did not.

Mohammed was dealing with a nomadic people. In Christianity, which is urban in its origins as a social compact, full unity with the Divine cannot be achieved without the Eucharist or Sacrament. Something interposes between God and Man; and a pious Christian without a church and clergy is somewhat lost. The Moslem is not dependent either upon ritual or upon a clergy, and his relation with God is much more direct. He is his own church.

To the Christian, in his attitude of prayer, it seems that he must go out of himself to find God. He aspires. He puts his hands together to form a spire; and he creates the Gothic cathedral. The later the history of Christianity, the more the motif of aspiration

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<sup>3</sup> Eric F. F. Bishop, trans., "The Forty-Two Traditions of An-Nawawi," *The Muslim World*, Vol. XXIX, April, 1939, pp. 163-177.



PLATE NINETEEN

The Kaaba in Mekka, to which every Muslim longs to make a pilgrimage once in his lifetime.

This picture, typical of those once sold to pilgrims as a souvenir, shows the flat, two-dimensional and "overlook" perspective employed by Arabic painters throughout their cultural history. Its resemblance to Byzantine principles of perspective is marked and far from accidental. The Arabic calligraphy is excellent.



recurs. But the symbol of the Moslem is the Kaaba, at Mekka, a stone contained within itself, as the Moslem is contained in himself. The difference is a profound one, for the Bedouin, alone in the desert with the sky, is never lost. He has only to say the five daily prayers, prostrating himself to do so, to feel the nature of God run through him. He has no need for the preliminary exorcism of the self that Christian ritual requires.

The Moslem's relations with both God and the world are therefore easier than the Christian's. There is not the dualism between the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit that results in a desire to destroy or humiliate the former. To Mohammedanism at the period of the Koran self-control is obligatory and necessary, but self-denial is neither. The corporeal has not the negative, defiled aspect that it has under Christianity.

From our Christian background, we are accustomed to the eternal presence of this negative, defiling, diabolic principle, and it is the first thing we are apt to seek when we examine other religions, and we are either astonished or dismayed not to find it. Satan, or Lucifer, is represented in Islam by Iblis, but Iblis is by no means evil. He was simply one of the angels who refused to worship Adam, that is, who refused to obey God when God commanded all the angels to worship Man as his highest creation. Iblis refused, for he said that he so loved God, that he could not bow down before any other creature, even though that creature was the creation of God. A devil who worships God to the exclusion of all else is certainly not an operative evil principle, as ours is. The evil-doer of the Koran is not the man who believes in evil, but the man who does not believe in God. To Islam, evil at most resides in Man's free will, the one thing that does not submit to the Divine:

There is no compulsion in religion; the right way has been distinguished from the wrong, and whoso disbelieves in Taghut and believes in God, he has got hold of the firm handle in which is no breaking off; but God both hears and knows.

God is the patron of those who believe, He brings them forth from darkness into light. But those who misbelieve, their patrons are Taghut, these bring them forth from light to darkness,—fellows of the Fire, they dwell therein for aye.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Muller, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

No mention, it is to be noticed, is made of those who *believe* in Taghoot, but only of those who do *not* believe in God.

One of the great Islamic mystics, Rabia, a woman, was once asked how she managed to fight the devil. She said, "The whole of me is so filled with the love of God that there is no room within myself for hating Satan." And this positive attitude is one of the fundamental points of Islamic mysticism. It is a very positive point. It robs the devil of his following.

The great advantage of Islam is that its sacred text is complete, unquestionable, historically established at a definite date, and is the work of one man; organized, coherent, and without elements of self-contradiction. The great religious impulse therefore is not directed to establish the nature of one's relation with God, for that is immutably and clearly given, but to enter into that relationship. Islam has thus produced an enormous and assured Mystical literature.

In Hinduism we have dealt with the necessity of abolishing the ego in order to enter into a relation with God. When we consider Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, we are confronted by a rather different process. The negative function of abolishing the self plays but a small part, as we might expect from a faith possessed of an evil principle that is only a refusal to do right, that is, to worship God.

The difference is summed up by one of the greatest of the Sufis, Ibn Arabi, who, when he was asked about extinction, called "Fana" in Islam, spoke only of "Fana in Fana," that is, extinction of extinction. For, as he pointed out, there is no point in extinguishing the ego, for the ego is only a fiction, since it is not divine. The essential spirit is much deeper than the ego, and is permanent. The ego is impermanent, and thus has no real or essential existence. There is no need to concentrate on its extinction, for once you achieve a union with the Divine then evil disappears, since there is no room left for it to exist.

Sufism thus differs fundamentally from many other brands of mysticism in not concerning itself with the negative, preferring to concentrate on the positive, believing that once union with the Divine is reached, then all things not Divine wither away.

The development of Sufism is interesting. Suf is the arabic word

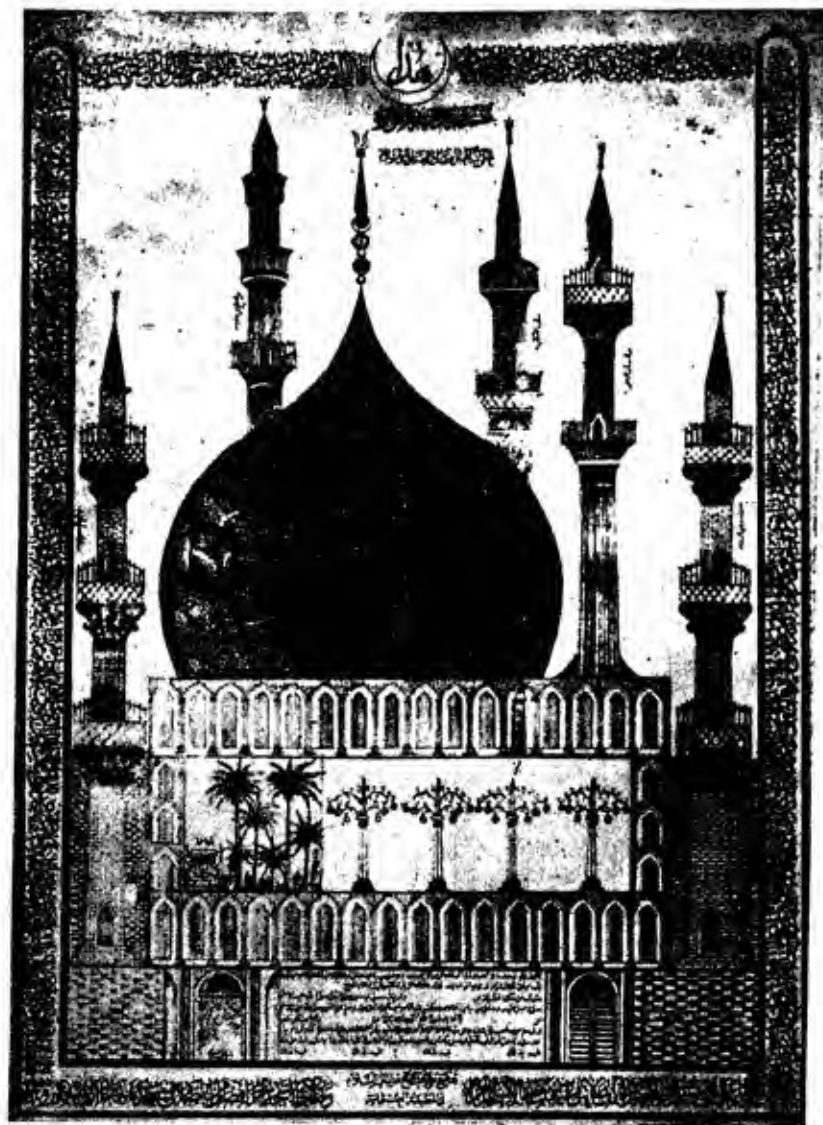


PLATE TWENTY

The Mausoleum of the prophet Mohammed at Mekka.

for wool; and the original sufis were those who wore simple, monastic cloaks of coarse wool. In Islam we find no intermediary between the individual and God, so that every man is his own church. We must therefore ask why, if this direct relationship does exist, a special group should arise that sought a closer union with God than was brought about in the day-to-day practice of Islamic doctrine.

Unfortunately Mohammedanism presents us only with the undoubted word for God, the Koran, and with a prophet who is in no way divine. Nor is this God in any way anthropomorphic, and the worship of prophets and earthly embodiments of God is expressly forbidden. But Man needs an object on which to focus his attention, an embodiment of the Divine that will make it easier for him to find guidance. So in Christianity we have God incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. We have a focus for our meditations, and a guide to our conduct, and this focus seems to be one of Man's most essential religious needs. Islam, despite its monopolism, despite its aversion to any kind of incarnation, yet developed such a focus. For God is so unknowable, unrecognizable, and limitless, that we cannot conceive of Him except in terms of some concrete symbol. Some of the Sufis began to turn Mohammed into an incarnation, calling him the Light of Light; and as Sufism degenerates, this incarnation becomes less symbolic and more concrete and dogmatic. No matter how perfect and direct may be the union between God and Man, the need for an embodiment or intermediary is a basic requirement of the religious temperament.

Sufism arose because, when the Prophet died in 632 he had made no provision for an apostolic succession and more important, no provision for a political one. The best man was chosen from among his disciples and companions, and thus in time dynasties were formed. As the Islamic Empire expanded, more and more machinery was required to keep it running. It thus became solidified, as did Christianity and indeed all organized faiths, into a doctrine or code of precedent and procedure; a vested interest. From the state, so to speak, of an empire on foot, a portable theocratic state, the Islamic world began to settle down. It expanded chiefly because it thrived on opposition:

Fight in God's way with those who fight with you. but transgress not; verily, God loves not those who do transgress.

Kill them wherever ye find them, and drive them out from whence they

drive you out; for sedition is worse than slaughter; but fight them not by the Sacred Mosque until they fight you there; then kill them, for such is the recompense of those that misbelieve.

But if they desist, then, verily, God is forgiving and merciful.

But fight them that there be no sedition and that the religion may be God's; but, if they desist, then let there be no hostility save against the unjust.<sup>5</sup>

So says the Koran, and in view of this dictate, the Christian desire to possess Palestine was a godsend, allowing the Arabs to wage a defensive war that, in the course of 900 years, finally brought them to the gates of Vienna. Thousands of Crusaders embraced Islam and were taken into the Islamic world, but as long as fuel remained to keep it going, Islam went on fighting. It was against the social and regulative structure produced by this state, so vastly expanded in such a short time, that Sufism arose.

It is claimed that Sufism derives from Christianity, Buddhism, or Neoplatonism. There is a grain of truth in this belief. The early Moslems were undoubtedly influenced by the Desert Fathers and by Buddhism, especially by the Buddhist idea that in the mystical ecstasy revelation comes in the form of light. Sufism was also influenced by Hinduism, particularly in the regimen of breath control, an essential of Yoga; and Neoplatonism did not leave it untouched. Yet essentially Sufism remained an Islamic doctrine the seeds of which are all contained in the Koran. Like all revealed religious texts, the Koran is both an intellectual assessment rationally stated, and a parable of some secret and ineffable doctrine, usually implying mysticism.

Man is a social animal and is apt to regularize the union with God into community practice or common procedures. The Sufis banded together into what are called *Zawiyas*, that is, a monastery, retreat, or settlement; a place where they gathered together to perform charitable acts and mystical exercises. These mystical exercises consist chiefly of procedures that transform the state of consciousness from one condition to another, by repetitious acts designed to enforce concentration, such as repeating the name of Allah, or drills parallel to those of Yoga.

Usually such *Zawiyas* center round some saint, and much of their work is social, educational, or even political. In essence, however,

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Sufism is a spiritual preparation for a state of enhanced consciousness that will make a realization of the Divine possible.

Sufis choose a new leader, or make group decisions, somewhat in the manner of a Quaker Meeting; that is, they meditate upon a problem and are unanimously moved to make a choice or statement, through one or all of them, as spokesman or spokesmen of the common will. How this process comes about we cannot definitely say, but that it is done cannot be doubted. At a Quaker meeting, during periods of silence, one can feel both the tug of strong wills in opposition and their eventual submission to a common impulse, until a conclusion is reached.

Almost from their first appearance the Sufis believed that the revelation of God, or permanent truth, comes only during ecstasy, the emotional condition that we might call paranormal.

The first great Sufi, Hallaj, who lived during the late 9th century, went counter to Moslem doctrine by developing a type of pantheism that arose from the circumstance that since God was seen to be the creator of all things, then he dwelt in all things, from a tree to a Man. Hallaj made the famous statement: *Ana el Haq*: "I am God, I am the Truth."

For this he was martyred, for to make such a statement was a crime against Islamic doctrine. His martyrdom was severe. It was decreed that he should be given 600 lashes, and if not dead, dismembered piecemeal. Before his execution Hallaj made a speech in which he asked God to forgive those who were punishing him, because they did not know what they were doing. Through his martyrdom he achieved the status of a saint, so that those who opposed him in life found themselves defeated by him in death, as did Henry II in the case of Thomas à Becket. His martyrdom had the effect of establishing the validity of the pantheistic belief that Man himself can become so much an instrument of the Divine that he is justified in saying *Ana el Haq*—"I am the reality, the truth, I am God."

It is not surprising that a doctrine based so entirely upon emotion should lead to extravagance and self-hypnosis. That is exactly what happened with Sufism, which was thereby discredited in the eyes not only of Orthodox Islam, but of all the seriously religious people of Islam.

It was El Ghazzali, who died in 1111 A.D., who enabled Sufism



to become respectable in the eyes of the orthodox by synthesizing reason and faith. This synthesis is something Christianity has often sought to achieve, without conspicuous success. That El Ghazzali should succeed is one of the distinguishing features of Moslem thought, philosophy, and science. We find it difficult to reconcile ideal Christian conduct with the production, let us say, of the cross-bow or the atom bomb. But Islam always strives for as complete a unity as possible between the every day world and religion. This effort we find in their medicine, their mathematics (where their interest is chiefly in trigonometry, since they wish to embrace the whole universe in their knowledge), and particularly in their philosophy. Ibn Cina, whom we know as Avicenna, and Ibn Rushd, whom we know as Averroes, strove constantly to build, by means of medical and philosophical knowledge, a rational foundation for religious belief. They did not attempt, as did St. Thomas Aquinas, to make that belief in itself rational.

Ghazzali and St. Thomas Aquinas both strove for a complete fusion of reason and faith. Ghazzali was a practical man. For example, by making a slight alteration in the attitude of prayer, he managed to shift the physiological balance and so make the mind more receptive to mystical ideas. He moved the hands from a position on the ground to the thighs, thus shifting the weight of the body from the anxiety centers of the bowels to the upper chest, shoulders, and head.

Ibn Arabi, the other great conciliatory mystic, came from Murcia in Spain and belongs to the late 12th century. He modified the pantheism of Hallaj, and for the rational self-discipline of El Ghazzali substituted an ecstatic emotional pre-condition. He is responsible for the doctrine of the predisposition of the soul, which holds that God's power over the soul of Man is not omnipotent, but is only as great as Man permits Him to generate within the soul. In Ibn Arabi we return once more to the doctrine, parallel to that of the Buddhists, that ultimate vision takes the form of light. It is true that by blinding ourselves momentarily with light we vanish into a world of even greater light, in which things move otherwise than they do under conditions of normal vision. Ibn Arabi produced the Illuminists; those who consider revelation in terms of light, a concept we may find even in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for Dante had read Ibn Arabi.



Another chief Sufi mystic was Rumi, the poet, who founded the Dervishes in the 13th century. The Dervishes, to create a state of consciousness not attainable by any other means, dance round and round, and achieve a bewilderment of the senses that prevents them from running to their usual material goals. He wrote the *Masnavi*, an important Sufi text. In his ideas, as in those of both Gazzali and Hallaj, we consider the element of love:

They had brought him once a water-melon as a present; he said: "Go, and call my son, Luqman."

When he had cut it and given him a slice, he ate it like sugar and honey. From the pleasure with which he ate it, he gave him a second, and so on till the seventeenth slice was reached. One slice remained, and he said, "I will eat this myself, so that I may see how sweet a melon this is. He eats it with such pleasure that from his enjoyment one's heart is filled with desire and longs for the morsel."

When he had eaten it, fire flamed in him from its bitterness; it both blistered his tongue, and burnt his throat. From its bitterness he became for a while stupefied; afterwards he said to him, "O soul of the world, how have you made all this poison a sweet antidote? How have you thought this harshness kindness? What patience is this? Wherefore is this endurance? Or is it perchance that this life of yours is in your opinion a foe? Why did you not plead a reason for abstaining and say, 'I have an excuse to offer; desist a while.'"

He answered, "I have eaten so much from your bountiful hand that I am bent double with shame. When suddenly I received one bitter thing from your hand, I was ashamed to make you acquainted with it. Since all the parts of my body have grown through your bounties, and are deep in your grain and snare,—if I cry out and complain on account of one thing which is bitter, may the dust of a hundred roads be on all parts of my body! It has received the sweetness of your sugar-giving hand; how could that sweetness allow any bitterness in the melon?"

Bitter things become sweet through love; copper things become golden through love. Dregs become clear and bright through love; pains become salutary through love. Through love a dead person is made living; through love a king is made a slave.

. . . . . A king said to a Shaikh in conversation: "Ask me for something in the way of a gift."

The Shaikh said, "Are you not ashamed to speak so to me? Be above this. I have two slaves, and despicable they are; but those two are rulers and lords over you."

The king said, "What are those two? This is an error."

He replied, "The one is 'anger' and the other 'sensuality.'"<sup>8</sup>

\* C. E. Wilson, trans., *The Second Book of the Masnavi* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1910), pp. 132-134, 128.

Both Ghazzali and Hallaj, though the latter also believed in the efficacy of suffering and pain, believed that it was impossible to achieve ecstasy without love. Neither will nor curiosity will bring us to God, but only love, and in turn we are brought to the necessity for the performance of good works. As Ghazzali says, "Meditation or adoration of God without good works is valueless." This necessity exists because love is transitive, and takes a direct object. On its more primitive level it is purely erotic, but on its higher levels the lover desires to act not with, but for the beloved. Thus love becomes service, in seeking an ever higher goal, one less attached to the demands of the ego. The prime themes of Sufism are the doctrine of light; union with the divine; love; and service.

Since we are soon to be concerned with the interaction of Moslem and Hindu belief, consequent upon the conquest of India by the Moslems, we must look back in time and further consider the nature and the development of Mohammedanism.

Mohammed abolished tribal gods and replaced them with the concept of a completely spiritual deity whom he calls Allah, a spirit not to be presented in any earthly form, a stern ruler who does not differentiate among peoples. Thus Islam is catholic in the original meaning of that word, throughout the whole world, or world-embracing. All who become converts to Mohammedanism are alike in having the same status under Allah, whether in temporal terms they are children, adults, men, women, masters, or slaves.

In historic terms, what Mohammed did was to substitute for the hundreds of stone images of various regional Gods the one, perhaps meteoric, stone of the Kaaba in Mekka. Incidentally Mohammed had to flee from Mekka to Medinah in 622, a year that is for the Mohammedan world the year one, the year of the origin of the new order, from which their time is counted. Through his political, no less than through his religious, genius, Mohammed welded the Arab world into a fighting unit that almost succeeded in conquering the world itself. It might then seem that Islam was a warlike religion, but it would be a mistake to say that Mohammed preached the necessity of a holy war. On the contrary his primary principle was one of tolerance. All men were to be tolerated, for they were all children of Allah, whether they knew it or not. All views of God should likewise be tolerated, Christian and Jewish alike. If others did not show a like tolerance, however, then a defensive war

was a necessity. The lack of toleration displayed later is to be blamed upon the successors of Mohammed, rather than upon him. Islam, like all other religions and human institutions, evolved, shifted, and changed in order to survive.

Mohammed, dealing with a nation of image worshippers, strictly prohibited all ikons, in order to wipe out the regional faiths of his time. He was thus an iconoclast, a smasher of images, having the mental attitude that we find at the flood of most faiths, when they are not only concerned with destroying the opposition, but are also in contact with the Being of Being that is beyond all images. Islam, in seeking to come into direct contact with God, had little use for secondary images. But as time went on, and as Islam spread from a stern Arabia to a softer and more indulgent Persia, things began to change. So we find the Persian convention of drawing religious scenes, but leaving the faces blank.

After 200 or 300 years of Islam the stern original commandments began to relax, and Islam divided into two major sects, the Sunna and the Shia. The Sunna is the strict, orthodox tradition, a fundamental adherence to the exact words of the Koran. The Sunna tradition is centered mainly in Cairo, at the great Al Asar University, and roughly may be said to control the western part of the Islamic world.

The eastern part is characterized by a freer spirit. What is important in Shia is the apostolic succession from the prophet through his son-in-law and progeny. Shia developed in Persia into a type of mysticism foreign to the original message of Mohammed, and Shia in turn produced Sufism, whose message is the oneness of the Divine with all creatures. In other words, the transcendence of God affirmed by Mohammed becomes, in the hands of Sufism, immanence. Since God is in all things, the ban against ikons is no longer either necessary or valid. So the Persian and Indian, or Moghul aspects of Islamic art are the higher ones, for with all representation strictly forbidden, Sunna Arabic Mohammedan art was limited to calligraphy. Calligraphy, it is true, was highly developed, to the point where the act of writing the name of Mohammed or a stanza of the Koran became in itself a supreme meritorious act. In this sense one might almost say that Mohammed created abstract art. Indeed, when we examine abstract art in our own day, an art that seeks the mystery of personality and emotion in some nonrepresent-

tational form, since representational forms have become meaningless, we may see much the same process at work. In one way, abstract art is an attempt to create another world, an answer to a repression of nature worship. In another, it is an attempt to depict the ineffable with non-depictive but all the same symbolic means.

Sufism is almost a contradiction of the teachings of Mohammed. Thus the two Sufis, Mohammed ibn Wasi and Shihbi once met. One said, "I have never seen anything without seeing God therein." The other replied, "I have never seen anything but God." So do mystics try to top each other with statements of their perception of the Divine.

If Islam had not developed into a mystic religion in Persia during the 12th and 13th centuries, it would probably not have been able to conquer India religiously as well as militarily. Once it had been converted into mysticism, Islam fitted the Indian way of thought in a way that the original doctrines of Mohammed could never have done. The physical conquest of India by the Moslems, though it had dwindled into impotence, was finally abolished only by the English. The religious conquest was much more thorough. There are today 68 million Moslems in India, a fair proportion of the 230 million Moslems in the world.

As an extremely late offshoot of Sufism, we should mention the recent sect of Baha'i, founded by proclamation at Shiraz, Persia, in 1884, by the Bab, who called himself "the gate." There had long been a popular belief among Mohammedans in a Mohammedan messiah who would lead Islam to complete victory; and emulation of Mohammed had been the object of the zeal of all later prophets. However Mohammed, once Mohammedanism had divided into sects, was regarded as the definitive Messiah, and therefore the mission of later messiahs and prophets, called Q'im, had been to purify the faith but never to alter its nature.

The Bab, however, revealed a new sacred book partly opposed to the Koran, and to the orthodox Mohammedans among whom he lived this act was heresy. The Bab sent out seventeen devoted disciples, called "the letters of the living." They were all executed, and the Bab himself was publicly killed in 1850, when 20,000 followers were also slain. In 1863 Baha' Ullah, the "glory of God," was accepted by his followers as the prophetic manifestation heralded by the Bab, and spent the next forty years, once he had been released



from prison, living in exile in Palestine. His son, Abdul Baha, or the "servant of Baha," the expounder and promoter of Baha'i, was appointed by his father at the center of the faith. He died in 1921, appointing his grandson, Shoghi Effendi, "first guardian of the cause." After that Baha'i had widespread success, and possesses today some 500 communities in Persia, (though they have recently been outlawed by the Persian government), and 90 in America.

The chief tenets of Baha'i are six in number, though longer lists have been given. Baha'i maintains that God is unknowable, except through the prophet, His manifestation; that divine revelation is continuous and progressive; that the faith is not opposed to earlier prophetic statements, but only to their exclusiveness; that the social and cultural evolution of Man proceeds in cycles of about 1,000 years in length; that though outwardly different, the various manifestations of the prophet are in essence one being and reveal one evolving truth; that there is a special divine command for each cycle, and that the command for this age is to unify humanity under one faith and one order; and that religion is not only a law for the guidance of the individual soul, but the supreme law of society and civilization.

Baha'i has accumulated a considerable literature, and in particular an extensive mystical literature, as an example of which we may briefly quote from *The Seven Valleys* of Baha' Ullah. The valleys are those of search, love, divine knowledge, divine unity, contentment, astonishment, and absolute poverty and annihilation. They represent the progress of the soul, as it passes upwards towards realization through various spiritual stages or degrees of insight, and are cast in the form of answers to questions posed by a Sufi mystic, a Mohammedan named Abdur Rahman:

He (the traveller) drinks from the cup of abstraction and gazes on the manifestations of singleness.

At this station he rends asunder the veils of plurality, flies away from the worlds of lust, and ascends to the Heaven of Oneness.

He hears with Divine ears, and beholds the mysteries of the creation of the Eternal One with God-like eyes. He steps into the retreat of the Friend, and becomes an intimate in the pavilion of the Beloved. . . .

He sees no commendation, name, or dignity of himself; he sees his own commendation in the commendation of the True One, and beholds the Name of the True One in his own name. He will know "all voices to be from the King," and hear all the melodies from Him.

He will be established on the throne of—"Say all is from God," and rest on the carpet of—"There is no power nor might but through God alone."

He will look upon things with the vision of oneness . . . and see the light of unity manifest and present in all existent things. All the differences which the traveller sees in the world of Being during the various stages of his journey, are due to the view of the traveller himself. We bring an illustration in order that this fact may become thoroughly evident:

Consider the phenomenal sun which shines forth on all beings with the same effulgence, . . .

But its appearance in every place and the light it sheds thereon, is in accord with the degree of the capacity of that place. In a mirror it reflects . . . it creates fire in the crystal . . . it develops everything according to the capacity of that thing; by the command of the Causer of effects.

. . . . . Peace be on whomsoever accomplisheth this supreme journey, and followeth the True One through the Lights of Guidance.<sup>7</sup>

This is the valley of Divine Unity. Baha'i is a gentle faith of brotherly love, moderation, unity, and, in practice, ethical culture.

<sup>7</sup> From Eric Hammond, ed., *The Splendour of God, Wisdom of the East Series* (London: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd., 1911), pp. 63-71.

AS WE KNOW ONLY TOO WELL FROM THE NEWSPAPER HEADLINES, the Moslems and the Hindus of India do not live in perfect amity. Yet out of the two traditions there arose a religion that combined both of them; that of the Sikhs, the creation of the prophet Nanak, and of his teacher and precursor, Kabir.

Kabir was born in or near Benares, of Mohammedan parents, probably about the year 1440. His father was a Mohammedan weaver, his mother a Hindu. He successfully strove to reconcile the two creeds in a common spirit. When he died both Hindus and Moslems claimed him as their leading saint, the Mohammedans wishing to bury him, the Hindus to cremate him; the one to give his body back to mother earth, the other to liberate the spirit from the material body. As the day of the funeral approached, a riot was expected, but during the night it appeared that the Gods had replaced the body with a huge heap of flowers. So the matter was resolved, the Mohammedans burying some of the flowers and the Hindus cremating the rest. This story is probably no more than a charming legend, but it is testimony to the reconciliatory nature of Kabir.

When he was still a boy Kabir wished to become a disciple of the celebrated Hindu ascetic Ramananda, who had brought to North India the religious revival that Ramanuja, the 12th century reformer of Brahmanism, had initiated in the South. This revival was partly a reaction against the increasing formalism of the orthodox cult, and in part a revolt against the intense intellectualism of Vedanta and the monism that that philosophy proclaimed. This reaction centered chiefly around an ardent devotion to the god

Vishnu, who represented the personal aspect of the Divine Nature, chiefly in his avatar as Krishna.

Ramananda refused the young Kabir. Kabir went to the bathing ghats of Benares, the slippery stairs that lead down to the river. When Ramananda came for his walk, he stumbled over Kabir and shouted, "Oh Ram, Ram, Ram," which was his name for God. Kabir leapt up and said, "Now you have given me the initiating mantra, so you must receive me as a pupil." Ramananda finally did so. Kabir was a syncretist of no mean order, and a poet of the first rank. As a syncretist, he was the founder of Sikhism. As a poet he so far succeeded in amalgamating the spirit of Moslemism and of Hinduism, that it is impossible to determine whether he was a Brahmin or a Sufi, a Vedantist or a Vaishnavite. He was, as he said himself "at once the child of Allah and of Ram."

Kabir set down his insights in many brief poems that reflect the spirit of Sufi mysticism:

In him (*the supreme*) there is no fire and ocean, no sunshine and no shade, in him is neither production nor destruction.

Neither life nor death, neither pain nor pleasure pervades him, there is empty, abstracted meditation (*in him*) both (*therefore*) are not in him.

The story of the self-existing one is inexpressible and wonderful.

He cannot be weighed, he is neither consumed nor increased, there is neither lightness nor heaviness in him.

Below and above, both are not in him, neither night nor day are in him. (*There is*) no water, no wind and fire (*are in him*), the true Garu brings about absorption in him.

He remains constantly unattainable and inapprehensible. (*but*) he is obtained by the favor of the Garu.<sup>1</sup>

And again:

He is not produced in any way, what is produced, he knows who is free from existence (*and*) nonexistence.

When the intelligence (*or consciousness*) of rising and setting is extinguished in the mind, then it is always naturally absorbed in deep meditation.<sup>2</sup>

The poem shows clearly the spirit of iconoclasm, the negative theology that denies that any space, time, spot, or activity is any holier than any other.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ernest Trumpp, trans., *The Adi Granth, or the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs* (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1877), pp. 494-95.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 653.

Whilst dwelling in the womb there is no clan nor caste.  
From the seed of Brahm(a) the whole creation (*is made*).

Kabir says: who reflects on Brahm(a):  
He is called a Brahman by me.<sup>3</sup>

For Islam overcomes all caste differences, and this levelling explains clearly its striking success in many parts of India. And there is no difference between Hindus and Moslems in their search for God. As for our attitude towards God:

Now (*my*) mind on the contrary has become eternal.  
Then it (*the mind*) is known, when one dies whilst living.  
How should I die now, my heart is comforted by death.  
Those die, who do not know Ram.<sup>4</sup>

With this idea we can agree, for what do we think when we say of a person who has died that now he or she is with God, as if someone who had not been with God all his life could hope for that unity to be achieved merely by dying. Of this Kabir says:

Who, whilst living, goes on dying, he lives again; in this wise he is absorbed in the Vacuum.  
If one remains in the darkness exempt from darkness, he is not thrown again into the water of existence.

.....  
He neither comes nor goes, he neither dies nor lives; seek for him.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, how can there be hope for him who has never realized the Brahman that is one with atman, who has never felt the thrill of the Miracle of Being, and who hopes to achieve it merely by dying?

(*Who*) enters into intimacy with the highest:

.....  
Religious merit and demerit, both he discards.  
Who (*was considered as being outside*) he is (*now*) known (*as being*) inside.

The separated king is recognized (*as one and the same with me*).

.....  
Below and above consider (*all*) is the same!  
There is neither low nor high, neither honour nor dishonour.  
In all things Ram is contained.  
In the beginning, end and middle he exists, O brother!  
Kabir sports in the ocean of happiness.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 460.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 463, 464.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 472.

Outside and inside light is diffused.  
 All works are then set aside (*by him*).  
 As long as in the body is another command:  
 So long the sweetheart is not obtained in the palace.  
 (When) love is bestowed on the sporting Ram:  
 Then the body (*becomes*) pure, says Kabir.\*

Even in translation, the poetry of Kabir has the lilt of greatness. It is a poetry, and therefore an insight, dominated by joy, by the fascinosum, rather than by the tremendum. And indeed the theology of the Orient, and of the Near East, contains almost nothing of the quarrel with God that we find so often in Occidental religious thought and verse. The poetry and religious thinking of the East is concerned with establishment of the nature of God, by stripping it of the outward forms with which we identify the Ultimate. But it is not much concerned with proving the existence of the Being of Being, which is taken for granted. Kabir offers us adoration without the element of propitiation.

The Orient has witnessed several absolute monarchs whose mystical turn of mind led them to attempt to synthesize an immanent universal creed. One thinks of both Asoka and Ikhnaton. On his own scale Kabir, with his all-pervasive Ultimate, succeeded in doing much the same thing. By going beyond the opposed concretized concepts of faith of his day, to the subject of faith itself; and by his grasp upon the Miracle of Being as the central perception of religious effort, he set forth a belief designed to overcome the differences between the struggling religions of his time and place.

However, he was the quintessence of a movement rather than the originator of one. The 15th century Benares into which he was born witnessed the syncretistic tendencies of Bhakti devotional fervor, and both Sufis and Brahmins met in constant disputation. As we have seen, Kabir attached himself in his youth to Ramananda, a teacher concerned with the doctrine of love and its mystical insights, a doctrine that was the Hindu equivalent of Sufism.

Of course Kabir, totally lacking in fanaticism himself, aroused the wrath of fanatics of both Moslem and Hindu vested religious parties, and had much trouble with both. That he should try to synthesize both religions was not half so dangerous in their eyes, as that he should say that religious institutions did not matter. In addition,

\* Ibid., pp. 484, 487, 488.



he never became a religious or professional ascetic, and continued to ply a trade—he was a weaver—that, making him self-supporting, freed him of dependence on any particular order. And since he had to earn his living, he never lost sight of the compromises and viewpoints that make it possible to reconcile temporal and spiritual life. He felt religious insight to be not a freedom from life, therefore, but part of it. He was married and had a family. He was, in other words, squarely in the world, and thus was one of the few mystics in a position to combine insight with common sense. Benares is the capital of religious India, in fact if not in name, and as a holy city, it had a considerable religious population, most of which Kabir managed to alienate at one time or another. But Kabir, being of Mohammedan birth, was outside the authority of the Brahmins, and was technically classed with the Sufis, to whom great theological latitude was allowed. So, though he was banished from Benares, probably in 1495, his life was at no time in danger. He seems to have wandered about the cities of northern India, surrounded by disciples, and he died at Maghar, near Gorakhpur, in 1518.

Give up all these changes to the left and right!

. . . by making firm the foot of Hari (*in oneself*) one remains steady.

In one place is the dwelling of (*us*) both.<sup>7</sup>

Kabir combines both transcendence and immanence, giving with one hand what he takes away with the other, as is the way of theological formulations:

In the very heart paradise is contained.

I do not know where paradise is!

Every one says, know, know, it is there!

By telling and being told (*by others*) it (*the mind*) will not be reassured.

Then the mind becomes tranquil, when egotism will depart.

As long as there is in the mind a longing for paradise:

So long will it not settle down at the feet (*of Hari*).

Kabir says: why is this said?

In the society of the pious is paradise.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, you cannot find the path solely by means of the intelligence, but if you are on it at all, then you have already reached your goal:

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 474, 654.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 461.

The stars, that are seen in the sky,  
 By which painter have they been painted?  
 Kabir says: he will know (*it*),  
 In whose heart is Ram (*and in whose*) mouth (*also*) there is Ram.<sup>9</sup>

He is naturally called drunk,  
 Who is drinking the juice of Ram and meditating on divine knowledge.

Go on, I will take thee to paradise.  
 If thou draw back, I will strike thee with the whip of love.  
 Kabir says: those are good riders,  
 Who keep aloof from the Veda and the Qur'an.<sup>10</sup>

Drunkenness, in later Arabic literature, is quite customarily a symbol for the state of mind that is able to embrace higher experience. Mohammed forbade wine, and in the countries where the Sunna tradition prevails Moslems forego it, but in Persia the drinking of wine was almost as much a part of inspired worship as it had been in Vedic times in India. Of course, since textually Mohammed forbade only wine, the Arab may imbibe beer and whisky with impunity, because neither was forbidden by Mohammed, who did not know of their existence. There are times when casuistry becomes necessary to the comfort of the believer:

The mind and breath are made the drinking-gourd, the fiddle is constantly prepared.  
 The string has become firm, it does not break, unbeaten the fiddle sounds.  
 Hearing (*its sound*) (*my*) mind has become delighted, it is absorbed in the omnipresent one, it does not (*any more*) vacillate.

On his neck is a garland, on his tongue Ram.  
 Taking his name a thousand (*times*) I make salutation (*to him*).  
 Kabir says: I sing the excellences of Ram.  
 Both, Hindus and Turks, I let know (*them*).

In the lotus-navel the altar is erected, the name of Brahm(a) is uttered.  
 That king Ram is obtained as bridegroom, so great is my lot!

.....  
 Kabir says: having married me the (*divine*) male, the One Lord, is gone.<sup>11</sup>

This excerpt sounds remarkably like the Song of Songs, in the sense that that erotic poem has been interpreted as a religious parable. Kabir does not agree with that tradition that would have us attain the Ultimate by having contempt for all things of the flesh,

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 467.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 466, 467.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 475, 657, 661.

and that among us has turned the Song of Songs, a Hebrew marriage poem, into something else. On the contrary, he feels that insofar as it is through love that we know the Divine, then earthly love is at least closer to the Divine than is earthly hate. He takes the ancient symbol of the soul as the bride of God, because it is submissive to God, and identifies himself with the feelings of the bride who anticipates the coming of her husband.

Kabir finds nothing out of the way in this interpretation. He is sufficiently sure of his faith to find it exemplified in the commonest metaphors drawn from everyday life. Both joy and sorrow are, to his mind, less abstractions than religious emotions to be found in all the experience of life.

The wind swings the paper-kite in the ten directions, (*but*) he keeps his attention on the string (*by which it is fastened*).<sup>12</sup>

And this is exactly what he does.

From Kabir, who attempts a synthesis, to his celebrated mystic successor, Guru, or teacher, Nanak, who was the actual founder of Sikhism, is a slight step downward. Nanak does not realize the Divine presence in all he does or perceives. He has to struggle hard against forgetfulness. Nanak is the eternal aspirant, striving towards the Miracle of Being. He tries to reach insight into it as though that were something he has lost. Yet his own songs are full of high spiritual insight, in their different way:

What power have I to describe Thee!  
I cannot even sufficiently admire Thee!  
Whatever is pleasing unto Thee is the only good.  
Thou alone endurest forever, O Formless One.<sup>13</sup>

Thus he makes the basic mystic visionary statement that it is as wrong to speak of the Divine as infinite, as it is to write of it as the One. Plotinus and the other Neoplatonists did try to denominate the Being of Being as the One, in whose presence all variety disappears, so that the One became the Infinite. But by this reasoning, the Neoplatonists, in common with all who have endeavored to state something about the Being of Being, merely try to establish the fact that the Ultimate is beyond number concept. They attempt

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 472.

<sup>13</sup> Teja Singh, trans., *The Japji* (Stockton, California: The Pacific Coast Khalsa Divan, 1945), p. 32.

to do so either by reducing all number to one, as the Neoplatonists do, or else by increasing number to astronomical proportions. Since no number exists that cannot be either added to or diminished, the Being of Being, which is beyond such processes, is also beyond number. Nanak realizes the truth of this reasoning:

Pilgrimages, austerities, special acts of mercy, almsgiving, and religious gifts are all dispensed with,

When one gets even a grain of the honor of His Name.

We should hear it, obey it, and love it in our hearts,

And thus wash away our sins at the sacred fount within us.

We should pray, all virtues are Thine, O Lord; none mine.

.....  
Nanak, everybody, thinking himself wiser than others, speaks of God;  
But I cannot say more than this: that the great Master's manifestation  
is great, and whatever is accomplished proceeds from Him.

He who ascribes any achievement to himself will not look beautiful in  
the world to come:

.....  
Nanak, let us only say: He is great. How great He alone knows.

.....  
Even emperors whose dominions are as vast as the ocean and who  
possess mountains of wealth,

Are not equal to the ant which in its heart does not forget its Lord.

.....  
Everything of His is invaluable and baffles description;

Those who have tried to describe have invariably grown silent in the  
end . . .

.....  
God can be as great as He pleases;

And, Nanak, tho True One Himself knows how great He is.

If there be any man so impious as to say he knows, he should be put  
down as the most foolish of men.<sup>14</sup>

However, Guru Nanak did not quite follow the spirit of his own visions. Though he says clearly that specific and localized acts of worship, such as pilgrimages and shrines, are of little worth and dispensable, he was not able to dispense with them himself. He was the first Hindu to make the journey to Mekka, an unprecedented thing to do when we remember the centuries of struggle and friction between the two faiths.

There was something compulsive about the nature of Nanak's belief. He totally lacked the calm assurance of union with the Being

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 34, 36, 39, 40.

of Being that animated Kabir, and was constantly in danger or in the condition of falling away from faith. We may also suspect that he sometimes allowed himself to indulge in the act of falling away because, once having attained to vision, he was in no ultimate danger of peril, and so could have the safety of a convenient hazard before returning. Or let us say, rather, that Kabir and Nanak represent two very distinct types of personality, the first the man who remains content in his enlightenment or satisfaction; the second, the man who can enjoy his insight or satisfaction only if he does not always possess it; the first the constant, the second the intermittent soul.

It was Nanak's daily habit, whatever he might be doing, to stop every five minutes, close his eyes for a while, and say, "I am Thine, Oh Lord, I am Thine." Then he went on once more with his ordinary daily activities.

He introduced the theory of the intermittent interruption of our contact with the Divine, almost an alternating current of relationship, into Sufism. His minute of self-reminder was thoroughly in line with the Hindu custom of repeating the name of the Lord, of constantly having a prayer on one's lips.

Such a practice is the hallmark of a restless personality. Guru Nanak did not stick by his inherited trade, as did Kabir, who remained a weaver all his life, but became a yogi or sannyasi, one who leaves behind all family ties, home life, and profession. Also, unlike Kabir, whose illumination was continuous, Nanak had a temporally isolated moment when he was called to God, a sudden endowment of grace, and could point, like any devout Methodist Christian Divine, to the specific moment when he felt his vocation. God Himself descended to give a cup of amrta, or ambrosia, to Guru Nanak, saying, "I am with you, I have given you happiness—and I shall make happy all who take your name—go and repeat my name—cause others to repeat it: my name is Allah—the primal Brahma—thou art the Holy Guru."

This vision is designed in the style of Mohammed's vision when he was called, as that is repeated by the muezzin, the singer who, chants from the minarets of the mosque five times every day, everywhere in the Moslem world: "Allah, Il Allah Wa Mohammed, Rasul Allah." "God is God. That is the one. And Mohammed is the messenger, or prophet of God." God's words to Nanak are in the same sense; so after centuries of struggle between the two faiths there

comes, in the 16th century, this statement: "I am Allah—the primal Brahma," uniting the highest names of the Ultimate in the Islamic and Hindu traditions.

After this synthetic vision, Guru Nanak remained for several days in silent meditation, and then set forth to proclaim his message that there was neither Hindu nor Moslem. Since both faiths at that time were mutually hostile, not at all integrated, and determined on the differences between them, there was much that was revolutionary, challenging, and radical in his doctrine. His teachings are collected in the book we have quoted from, the *Japji*, from Japa, the Hindu formula for the repetition of God's name, and ji, which means venerable or holy. The *Japji* is the basic religious text of some five million people in India, the Sikhs. Guru Nanak was thus the founder of a new religious community. In the year 1577 the great temple at Amritsar (amrta, or deathlessness) was given to the Sikh community by the Moghul emperor of the time, the great Akbar. In this temple the *Japji*, together with additional scriptures contained in a book called the *Granth Sahib*, or *High Standing Book*, was enshrined, became personalized, and was worshipped in itself.

The chief tenets of the Sikhs are a belief in one God, the prohibition of idolatry, the abolition of caste, and a refusal to recognize Brahmanical supremacy. The *Japji* defines God as the Highest Unity, in which the absolute and the personal are reconciled. In our life He can be realized only by surrender to Him. Praise of this Ultimate is sufficient worship. The Sikh is self-dedicated to the divine purpose, and insight makes him a representative man. His example may lead others to their own insight, by progressing from religious consciousness, which produces a sense of duty, through Reason and Self-Exertion to the culmination of religious activity, which is Action made possible by love of and insight into the Ultimate. Our duty is to please God. Those who succeed in pleasing God are close to God, and those who do not, are far away from Him. The emphasis upon action rather than meditation was to have important political results.

Today, if you go to the golden temple that stands by the wonder-working lake at Amritsar, you will hear a priest chanting from the *Granth Sahib*. This is the only symbolic or religious object in the temple, and relays of priests read it continuously, 24 hours a day, year in and year out, and have done so since 1577.



Unfortunately, like all faiths, but most noticeably like all inspirational faiths, Sikhism, with the process of time, became ossified into a ritual; and from a peaceful mystical faith, became an aggressive and warlike one. The Gurus who followed Nanak included some great military commanders. The 5th and 6th Gurus transformed the entire Sikh community into an army, every Sikh becoming a Sepahi, or warrior, a word known to us in the English form of Sepoy. They were extremely successful fighters, destroying many Moslems. The 9th successor of Guru Nanak was to become particularly famous, since, when imprisoned by the Moghul Emperor at Bombay, he was permitted to ascend to the roof of the prison house, where he was caught supposedly peering into the royal harem quarters. For this alleged act he was condemned to death, but as he was led to his execution, he shouted, "Oh great Emperor, when I was on the roof of my prison I did not look at the ladies in the harem quarters, but, beyond your residence, I looked far to the west across the ocean, waiting for the vessels of the foreign conquerors who are going to destroy your rule thoroughly."

When the British landed shortly afterwards, the Sikhs therefore considered themselves the natural allies of these foreigners who had clearly come to destroy the Moghul emperor; and ever since, with few interruptions, they have been faithful servants of the British. You will find Sepoys in all remaining parts of the British Empire.

It is perhaps just as well, considering social and religious friction, that the Sikhs are largely restricted to the Punjab and the British Army. There is, however, a large colony of them in California, at Stockton, where they maintain a temple. They came there in a most indirect manner. They had gone to the Coronation of George V, had stayed in Canada on the way back, and then moved down to America. Though they are chiefly employed in the rice and cotton fields of the Sacramento valley, for very low pay, their temple is a rich and well-established one. Since they cannot legally import Indian wives, they have intermarried with the local Mexicans, thus producing a new racial strain. Their religion nonetheless remains intact. I once asked the old priest of their temple if he felt the American Sikhs, being uprooted and displaced, would be able to keep alive the true spirit of their religion. He replied that true religion can be practiced any time, anywhere.

We have just mentioned the 9th Guru. The 10th, Gobind Singh,

was the most celebrated of all, for he introduced two initiating ceremonies into the Sikh community, the Khalsa and the Pahul.

In the year 1700, the Sikhs were hard pressed by Aurangzeb, the last Moghul emperor who possessed any real power. At a decisive battle Gobind Singh sought to encourage his men by asking five of them to make the supreme sacrifice. One by one they filed into a tent, and after each entry Gobind Singh returned with a bloody knife and demanded another volunteer. In actuality he had sacrificed a goat for each man, but this ritual act, which we might compare to the Mithraic baptismal bloodbath, is the initiation called Khalsa. Khalsa is a willingness to sacrifice yourself in every respect. If you are willing to do so, then the Divine will not wipe you out, but will accept you. If you are not willing, however, you will receive nothing in return.

The other sacrifice is called Pahul. It is more widespread, and is now used to initiate all who wish to join the Sikh community. The Sikh has inherited from Islam the belief that everybody can become a true-believer merely by declaration, at any time. Nobody, whether he wishes to or not, can become a Hindu who is not born a Hindu. You may join various philosophic schools connected with the system, but you can be a Hindu only by birthright. Islam stands against such a tribal concept of religion, believing that all men on earth are the same under God. This principle the Sikhs have inherited.

The stirring of water with a two-edged dagger in a big iron pot prepares holy water used to initiate anyone who wishes to become a Sikh, including women, who may also be accepted. Iron, the warlike metal, has particular sanctity for the Sikhs, but the water so stirred must be drunk by the initiates, for it is symbolic of amritsar (amrta); it wipes out caste and all previous differences that may have clung to you before your initiation. At the same time, that is around 1700, that these two sacraments were introduced, all Sikhs also took the name Singh, which means lion. The five vows of the Sikhs make them easy to recognize: they wear topknots and never cut their hair, but bind it up on their heads; they wear turbans and a special sort of comb, as well as an iron bracelet; and a very short sword and special short trousers complete the costume. They are easily distinguishable from the rest of the Indian population, as they wish to be.

The Sikhs present us with a synthetic or compromise religion,

and look upon themselves as an elect, or chosen people. Though a vital group, they are not in the main tradition of either the Arabic or the Hindu-Buddhist complex to which we have devoted most of our attention. The Sikh religion is a notable result of the intrusion of the Moslem into the Hindu world that profoundly influenced the later development of Hindu thought. It also illustrates the promise of the possibility of cooperation between Hindu, Moslem, and Sikh that has always been practiced by the upper-class Indians, whose influence in the matter has been reflected among the villagers. Where tolerance in India breaks down is among the half-educated white-collar workers of the towns and cities, who project their own insecurity of position in the form of religious intolerance.

## 18.

## JUDAISM

WE MUST NOW TURN BACK TO THE OCCIDENT TO CONSIDER the two faiths that predominate here today, together with one dead faith that has done much to give our religious picture its present form.

Judaism is the religion not of a country, but of a people; but it first arose in a specific country; one to which the Jews have always clung, though historically their absolute dominion over it was brief. Indeed, Judaism, unlike most other surviving world religions, is inextricably bound up with nationalism, and with the concept of the chosen people. Palestine is a country of desert and mountains, far from fertile, dotted with oases, and not in the least productive of an easy or comfortable life. In addition, Syria and Palestine have from time immemorial been the battleground of diverse military and migratory forces. The Hebrews themselves were not indigenous to this place, but entered it as nomadic tribes, probably from the eastern deserts and from the South. They were, strictly speaking, less nomads than shepherds who wandered from place to place, following their flocks. They first entered Palestine, in the area between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, sometime between 1400 and 1200 B.C. It took some 300 years for them to consolidate and to mingle with the indigenous inhabitants of the region, setting up a unified state under David, about the year 1005 B.C. David was succeeded by Solomon, after whose death the kingdom split into two independent sections, that of Juda surviving for about 100 years, that of Israel succumbing to the Assyrians after about 200 years, in 722 B.C. Juda, however, remained a satrapy with its own kings until the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., which covers roughly the period of the Babylonian Captivity. In one way or another,

much of the basic mythology of Judaism derives from the beliefs of Babylonia, and from those of Egypt.

The early nomadic Hebrews were not monotheists, but in common with most such unsettled and primitive tribes, were much at the mercy of the circumstances of their nomadic life, and worshipped a variety of local and natural personifications of the forces of nature. In a land so arid and so devoid of vegetation, tree and water spirits were of particular importance:

Thus saith the Lord the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt of old on the other side of the river, There the father of Abraham, and Nachor. And they served strange gods. (Joshua 24:2)

In his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, T. E. Lawrence points out the degrees to which the geography of Palestine influenced the development of Judaism. He underlines emphatically how much the hard, precise definition of desert light, the emptiness of the landscape, and the aridity of the economy influenced the development of a moral and theological system. That system was based upon absolute black and white ethical flats coupled with an ethic of rewards, punishments, and benefits as stern and inexorable as the living conditions of the time. A people living in a land of extremes could be at ease only with extremes, for they learned from the circumstances of their lives that any relaxation from rigorous self-control led to disaster. In addition, the aridity of their environment was mirrored in a spiritual aridity no less intense. Since their own individual lives were poverty-stricken, without ease, and ascetic, it was natural that they should regard all material life as equally without value. And when their lives grew more easeful, the harshness of their moral system, which grew out of their original poverty, forbade the very luxury and ease they had so painstakingly attained. It was a faith of the desert. It could not survive in the relative ease and moral confusion of the cities. The part of the Hebraic population that remained nomadic kept to the stern and patriarchal religion the desert had evoked. The part of the population that had settled in cities along the littoral fell victim to exotic creeds more suited to a town morality. A clash between the two was inevitable.

This was the condition of the Hebrews when they first entered Palestine: a people given to tribal totemism, divided into clans, worshipping many local deities of water, of trees, of fire, and of storms, and still indulging in human sacrifice as a religious rite.

At this period in their history the Jews were described as living across the Euphrates. At Ur in Chaldea, Abraham, though mentioning human sacrifice, believed in the righteousness of God.

Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice. (Gen. 15: 6) And the Lord said to Abraham: Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed. (Gen. 12:1-3) I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea shore: thy seed shall possess the gates of their enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice. (Gen. 22:17-18)

Thus we already have the idea of a chosen or elect people, favored by God, and the friends of God, who backs them up in their opposition to other peoples, and promises them a countless progeny, essential to the warlike founders of a nation, who can never have enough troops. As yet there is no question of the propagation of the faith.

Later we come to the development of circumcision, almost as an initiatory rite, but one with primitive and psychological overtones:

And when he was in his journey, in the inn, the Lord met him, and would have killed him. Immediately Sephora took a very sharp stone, and circumcized the foreskin of her son, and touched his feet, and said: A bloody spouse art thou to me. And he let him go after she had said: A bloody spouse art thou to me, because of the circumcision. And the Lord said to Aaron: Go into the desert to meet Moses. And he went forth to meet him in the mountain of God, and kissed him.

And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord, by which he had sent him, and the signs that he had commanded. And they came together, and they assembled all the ancients of the children of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had said to Moses: and he wrought the signs before the people, and the people believed. And they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel: and that he had looked upon their affliction: and falling down they adored. (Ex. 4: 24-31)

It was Moses, around 1200 B.C., who first tied Judaism together and gave it a codified creed, uniting the tribes with a bond of common worship and the promise of deliverance from the Egyptian captivity. He promoted the cause of Hebrew liberty in the name of a righteous God, a consolidated monotheistic deity, who for the first time became not only paramount among deities, but the unique God.



Moses said to God: Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel, and say to them: The God of your fathers hath sent me to you. If they should say to me: What is his name? What shall I say to them?

God said to Moses: I AM WHO I AM. He said: Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: HE WHO IS, hath sent me to you. (Ex. 3: 13-14)

It is also to be noted that the unified concept of one all-embracing God that Moses enunciates is not like the concrete and specific deities of tribe and place previously worshipped, but an ineffable Being, unique, indefinable, relatively stripped of anthropocentric traits, but, unlike the God of many other faiths, one who still definitely intervenes to govern the destiny of a specific group of people. He is very much the guardian, the teacher with a favorite pupil. And this situation is always to remain the same. In other religions, anyone who perceives the ineffable is on the road to salvation, not because he is Chinese, Persian, Indian, or Japanese, but because he has gained insight through the religious disciplines of various sects and creeds. But Judaism is strongly national, and if not racial, is at least tribal.

Sigmund Freud, in his *Moses and Monotheism*, though forced to reconcile his dates, regards Moses as similar to, and deeply influenced by, Amenhophis IV. Amenhophis was the Egyptian Pharaoh who, under the name of Ikhnaton, attempted to establish monotheism in Egypt under the form of worship of Amon, a supreme but highly abstract solar deity. Freud goes so far as to assume that Moses was either one of Ikhnaton's court nobles, or else the descendant of one of them. But except for the monotheistic concept, Jehovah or Jahweh and Amon have little in common. Ikhnaton's sun god demonstrated preponderantly the fascinosum aspect of the numen, and was a universal deity, controlling the destinies of Mankind, whether Mankind was aware of him or not. Jehovah, though even at this early date he has aspects of the fascinosum, is chiefly an experience of the tremendum, and can, or rather will, work in the destinies only of those who directly worship or placate him. Jehovah exacts tribute. Ikhnaton's sun god received it, but did not demand it:

And the Lord spoke all these words: I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt not have strange gods before me,

Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any



PLATE TWENTY-TWO

Religious symbolism has strong psychological associations. This illustration probably resembles closely the picture of God in the minds of most Christian laymen. From childhood on, religious training builds up in their minds a similar image, derived from readings in religious publications and Bibles, such as the illustrated 19th century Bible from which this steel engraving was taken. The exclusive masculinity of the Divine has rarely been questioned by the hundreds of millions of Protestant Christians of recent times.

thing that is in heaven above, or in earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth.

Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve *them*: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. (Exodus 20: 1-6)

It is interesting, by the way, to compare this injunction against graven images with the similar one of Mohammed. Both served the same purpose, among peoples of the same racial stock: abolition

an almost protective personal and national obedience to the dictates of God.

Hosiah, on the other hand, who comes shortly after Amos, dwells upon the fascinosum, and states that God loves Man. He is the first among the Jews to state this concept, and he believes that God will always be ready to forgive a repentant sinner.

For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice: and the knowledge of God more than holocausts. (Hosiah 6:6)

Still later, around 735 B.C., Isaiah is vouchsafed a vision of the grandeur and splendor of God, in majestic holiness:

In the year that King Ozias died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and his train filled the temple.

Upon it stood the seraphims: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings: with two they covered his face, and with two they covered his feet, and with two they flew.

And they cried to one another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory.

And the lintels of the doors were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (Isaiah 6: 1-5)

The Prophecy of Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, is a collection of sermons that also dwells upon the magnificence of God, and prophesies a glorious future for Israel, despite the inevitable punishment inflicted by God's wrath. God will punish Israel through the agency of other nations:

Her princes have judged for bribes, and her priests have taught for hire, and her prophets divined for money: and they leaned upon the Lord, saying: Is not the Lord in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us.

Therefore, because of you, Sion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be as a heap of stones, and the mountain of the temple as the high places of the forests. (Micah 3: 11-12)

Persistent sinfulness will always be judged. Nahum, who lived in the 7th century B.C., claimed that God was first of all good, and second strict and supreme among nations. Habakkuk, who was contemporary with Nahum, stated that God offered first judgment, and then hope; the tremendum, and then the fascinosum becoming apparent. At about the same period, Jeremiah stated that God could renew goodness in the heart of the worshipper:

Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Juda:

Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: the covenant which they made void, and I had dominion over them, saith the Lord.

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying: Know the Lord: for all shall know me from the least of them even to the greatest, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31: 31-34)

Jeremiah, in short, was the first individualist, the one who perceived that knowledge of God and insight into the Being of Being was a matter of the individual soul, rather than of the destinies of a racial group arbitrating the beliefs of various of its members.

Ezekiel, during the Exile (596-539 B.C.) in Babylonia, continued Jeremiah's teachings by claiming that God was capable of mercy and forgiveness, and that the Exile itself was not merely God's punishment of Israel for its misdeeds, but was also to be taken as an act of purification and discipline. He offered a message of hope and encouragement. The encouragement was extended, however, only to Israel:

Thus saith the Lord God: No stranger uncircumcised in the heart, and uncircumcised in the flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, no stranger that is in the midst of the children of Israel. (Ezekiel 44: 9)

Here we may read of the new Jewish community and of the new temple to be built in Jerusalem. Ezekiel is strongly nationalistic. Isaiah sees the course of Israel's history as an example of training in the nature of the Divine, and is the first to declare that Jehovah is the one and only God in the universe:

Be comforted, be comforted, my people, saith your God.

Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and call to her; for her evil is come to an end, her iniquity is forgiven: she hath received of the hand of the Lord double for all her sins.

The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways plain.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh together shall see, that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken.

The voice of one, saying: Cry. And I said: What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field.

The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen, because the spirit of the Lord hath blown upon it. Indeed the people is grass:

The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen: but the word of our Lord endureth for ever.

Get thee up upon a high mountain, thou that bringst good tidings to Sion: lift up thy voice with strength, thou that bringst good tidings to Jerusalem: lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Juda: Behold your God:

Behold the Lord God shall come with strength, and his arm shall rule: Behold his reward is with him and his work is before him.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather together the lambs with his arm, and shall take them up in his bosom, and he himself shall carry them that are with young.

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and weighed the heavens with his palm? who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

Who hath forwarded the spirit of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor, and hath taught him?

With whom hath he consulted, and who hath instructed him, and taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and shewed him the way of understanding?

Behold the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance: behold the islands are as a little dust.

And Libanus shall not be enough to burn, nor the boasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing, and vanity.

To whom then have you likened God? or what image will you make for him?

Hath the workman cast a graven *statue*? or hath the goldsmith formed it with gold, or the silversmith with plates of silver?

He hath chosen strong wood, and that will not rot: the skilful workman seeketh how he may set up an idol that may not be moved.

Do you not know? hath it not been heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have you not understood the foundations of the earth?

It is he that sitteth upon the globe of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as locusts: he that stretcheth out the heavens as nothing, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.

He that bringeth the searchers of secrets to nothing, that hath made the judges of the earth as vanity.

And surely their stock was neither planted, nor sown, nor rooted in the earth: suddenly he hath blown upon them, and they are withered, and a whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

And to whom have ye likened me, or made me equal, saith the Holy One?

Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these things: who bringeth out their host by number, and calleth them all by their names: by the greatness of his might, and strength, and power, not one of them was missing.

Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel: My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

Knowest thou not, or hast thou not heard? the Lord is the everlasting God, who hath created the ends of the earth: he shall not faint, nor labour, neither is there any searching out of his wisdom.

It is he that giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not.

Youths shall faint, and labour, and young men shall fall by infirmity.

But they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40: 1-31)

Tell ye, and come, and consult together: who hath declared this from the beginning *who* hath foretold this from that time? Have not I the Lord, and there is no God else besides me? A just God and a saviour, there is none besides me.

Be converted to me, and you shall be saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is no other.

I have sworn by myself, the word of justice shall go out of my mouth, and shall not return:

For every knee shall be bowed to me, and every tongue shall swear. (Isaiah 45: 21-24) (The Second Isaiah)

Remember the former age, for I am God, and there is no God beside, neither is there the like to me: (Isaiah 46:9) (The Second Isaiah)

In 600 years we have come from one god among the many contending ones, to the concepts of a benevolent, if vengeful monotheism.

The Babylonian Captivity ended when Cyrus captured that city in 539 B.C. When the Jews returned to Palestine, they met with a cool reception, as refugees are apt to do when they return after a long period to their homeland, and as a result, many stayed in Babylon, and the return of the others was slow. Most of those who returned became businessmen. They were adjusted now to the culture of cities. They founded synagogues staffed with rabbis, rather than temples staffed with priests, and it was at this period that legalism arose. Under Haggai and Zechariah the temple was rebuilt, but never finished. Nehemiah refortified Jerusalem about 434 B.C.



At about the same time, Esra the scribe wrote, rewrote, or codified Deuteronomy, or Second Law. This book adapted the Mosaic code to present conditions, and was the foundation of Legalism. Since Holy Writ was sacred, any later Prophetic writings had to be disguised as parts of it. Thus Deuteronomy was ascribed to the period of Joshua. The priestly code was now settled, and the legal portions of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers are of the same date as Deuteronomy, and represent a revision and insertion. Legalism was a meticulous code of minutely-detailed rules, laying stress on externals. Understood in it was the attitude that with this strict regimen the Jews were merely returning to an original concept of purity, and thus providing a precedent and tradition for legalistic strictures, such as strict observance of the Sabbath and an equally strict insistence upon the purity of Jewish blood, which must not be defiled by exogamic marriage:

Now therefore give not your daughters to their sons, and take not their daughters for your sons, and seek not their peace, nor their prosperity for ever: that you may be strengthened, and may eat the good things of the land, and may have our children your heirs forever. (Ezra 9:12)

And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month. (Ezra 10:17)

Against this strict and somewhat petty feeling for the letter of the law, the cost of which was loss of insight into the spiritual side of religion, the Book of Ruth is a polemic but not a successful one. Later rabbinical Judaism became a system of compulsive taboos, observances, and rituals, which completely reworked Jewish history to provide a precedent for its own priestly strictures. After the prophets came the sages and philosophers. Job opposed the concept that God exacts a stern penalty for man's transgressions, believing that God was greater and more mysterious than his guise as an intervener in Man's destiny. He approached the ineffable, and betrays a deep Persian influence in his concept of Satan, who has many of the qualities of Ahriman. The various names given to the evil principle by the Jews were taken, in general, from the pantheons of their neighbors. Man, too, came to be regarded as an insignificant microbe in the eyes of God.

The Psalmists from 400 B.C. to 100 A.D., and the Apocalyptic, despairing of the ability of the Jews to overcome the suppression imposed on them by dominant neighbors, particularly Persia, now

looked forward to the coming of a Messiah, and the sudden putting forth of Jehovah's power, for the restoration of the Jewish state. With time, no less than 34 Jews, besides Jesus, put themselves forward as the Messiah predicted. Daniel and Enoch both dream of a coming date of liberation, and pin their hopes on an act of Divine initiative. The astrological contents of the body of works now known as the Old Testament were ransacked for predictions, and vague historic memories were transformed into prophetic statements about future events, both as a threat and as a hope. But in so trying to visualize the inevitable course of future events, Daniel and Enoch also did much to paralyze personal initiative and responsibility, since if things were ordained to happen, no attempt to alter them could be anything but futile. In this regard it is important to mention that Hebrew verbs possess no future tense, but that Hebrew does possess a series of intensives and emphatics that alter the degree to which things happen, but have nothing to do with the time at which they happen. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the translators rendered the intensives as futurities, altering the whole emphasis of many passages, so that the hope expressed in the Old Testament, is frequently the mere result of a mistranslation.

Later legalism became so elaborate a system of injunctions, prohibitions, and meticulous ritual acts, as to obscure almost entirely direct insight into Ultimate Being, or the Being of Being, and does not concern us here.

The Jewish concept of God was accumulative, and not the direct result of one man's insight. During the nomadic period there were many gods, and even though the worship of Jehovah and Elohim (in itself a plural) became predominant, even the second Decalogue does not deny the existence, or rather co-existence, of other Gods. This belief is called henotheism, or worship concentrated on one out of a multitude of gods. This god was Jehovah. He was in the beginning strongly nationalistic in nature. David, for instance, regarded banishment from his country as banishment from his God. The prophets of the 8th century added to the attributes of Jehovah those of righteousness, holiness, lovingness, and reasonableness. Those of the 7th and 6th centuries stressed each individual's moral responsibility to Jehovah, who had now supplanted the other god-concepts. Jeremiah, under exile and captivity, developed the belief that non-Jews might participate in the worship of Jahveh:

And when I shall have plucked them out, I will return, and have mercy on them: and I will bring them back, every man to his inheritance, and every man into his land.

And it shall come to pass, if they will be taught, and will learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name: The Lord liveth, as they have taught my people to swear by Baal: that they shall be built up in the midst of my people.

But if they will not hear, I will utterly pluck out and destroy that nation, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 12:15-17)

By the time of the end of the exile and captivity, Judaism had become a faith disregarding all barriers of race and of space, and had become an ethical monotheism.

Belief in a Messiah had a somewhat more varied career. The early prophets speak of a coming judgment from which some, the truly repentant, would be duly saved. Isaiah calls these saved ones "the remnant." In Jeremiah, the Messiah is called a coming king; in Micah, a good shepherd; in the second Isaiah a devoted servant, identified with Cyrus, King of Persia, who ended the Babylonian Captivity and restored the Jewish kingdom as a satrapy.

After the restoration of the kingdom, the Jews fell consecutively under the sway of Xerxes, Alexander the Great, the Egyptian Ptolemies, the Seleucids, or Asiatic and Arabian heirs of Alexander; the Assyrians, Antiochus IV of Antioch. And, in Juda itself, the Maccabees were influenced by the Hellenistic tradition, some of which filtered into legalism. It was partly to relieve the state of these various controls, in particular that of Rome, that the 34 Jewish messiahs came and went. Juda had varying fortunes under Rome, whose bureaucratic system the Jews would not accept, until the final destruction of the Temple during the reign of the Emperor Titus (A.D. 70).

The later history of the Jews, which is the history of later legalism, is somewhat lugubrious, the ten commandments swelling to 613, a process that had the same causes and followed the same course as the multiplication of the number of Indian castes under Hinduism. After the Diaspora and with the growth of anti-Semitism, which necessitated a strong discipline among the Jews if they were to survive, the old religious values were forgotten in favor of the new ethical discipline. Religion became mere morality, as all religions are apt to become in time. The Talmud was a strict system for governing the laity, but definitely not a method of insight into the

nature of God. The Kabbala and the Russian Chassidi were produced in reaction to this tendency.

There are today about 11,000,000 Jews, scattered all over the world. After the inauguration of the Zionist movement in 1897 and the establishment of Israel after World War II, they have a country once more. The dominant movement in Jewry today is Zionist liberalism, which stresses only morals and ethical conduct. This seems to be the normal pattern of religion, which as its containing culture reaches stasis, develops a rigid or relatively rigid system of moral and cultural behavior that, though it can be inspired by true religious insight into the Being of Being, as in Zen, is usually either a parallel to insight or a substitute for it. Nor is this pattern an altogether surprising one. Insight into the Being of Being is, as we have seen, an intensely personal matter, one that each man must achieve for himself. And when a civilization or a people becomes overripe, when it has put forth all its roots and branches, what it wishes is to sustain itself, rather than to seek any new source of power. It is group activity that becomes a desirable social goal, rather than individual initiative. Thus an ethical system, since it is more useful in relation to its purpose, will be socially more desirable than personal inspirational insight, which the society as a whole will tend to discourage or disregard. Such a society can reorganize itself, but reorganization and renewal are two very different things. At this stage in its development, a society or a religion has covered the entire extent of the human environment available to it, and has no sources for renewal, since it has tapped them all. Each religion we have examined has continued to grow, either by changing its environment through missionary activity in seeking a new one; or by changing its laity; by emigration; the tapping of new social levels; or in being adopted by a foreign people. Judaism, like the others, first flourished when the Hebrews came into contact with the inhabitants of the regions into which they migrated, and its great spurts of change occurred at the time of the Exile in Egypt and the Babylonian Captivity. When the Jews became a settled and secure satrapy, the religion hardened and became codified. Against the stimulus of anti-Semitism, it stiffened and ossified, its bones fusing beyond possibility of new movement. The return to Israel could produce one of two things: either it can attempt to recapture an earlier spirit, or it can try to produce something new out of the new na-

tionality in the old place. Since the origins of Judaism show it as a religion so firmly rooted in one specific spot, it will be interesting to see what the return to that spot may or may not do to modify the faith.

## 19. MANICHAEISM

BEFORE DISCUSSING CHRISTIANITY, WE MUST TURN ASIDE TO examine Manichaeism, a "dead" religion; the most powerful early rival of Christianity, and a rival that the Christian Church found extremely difficult to stamp out. Though as an organized faith Manichaeism was totally obliterated, and all its institutions and priesthood completely destroyed, its ideas went underground. Some of its ideas, however, tintured Christian doctrine, and they persist to this day as a powerful countercurrent to the Christian tradition. Because the strength of Manichaeism was never underestimated by the Church, being a Manichaean was considered the supreme heresy.

The philosophy of work, of salvation by ardent action, is the most popular philosophy of our day, and therefore the religion of Zarathustra finds many adherents, even among those who had never heard of it. The impact of Zoroastrian dualism upon Christianity and outside of Christianity was extremely strong, and though not many of the mythological ideas of Zarathustra survive in the West, the successive impact of his dualism does. It is still a considerable force.

This continuing influence becomes obvious when we consider the system of Mani and the religion named after him. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that Manichaeism is probably the most widespread and most alive religion in the Occident and in parts of the world touched by the Occident. To many it may appear a dead religion, and as an organized religious institution it is. But it has millions of followers who have never heard of Mani and who do not even know the nature of the thing they follow. In an anonymous way Manichaeism has penetrated deeper than any other religion has succeeded in doing, touching the subconscious of the Christian



mind and the fundamental structure of the system. Thoroughly repressed, it is none the less alive for that, and perhaps is more alive for being held under such tension. It is no wonder that Christianity hated and feared it and stamped it out whenever it became evident. If you wished to swear forcibly or used a really dangerous bad word in cursing someone during the Middle Ages, you couldn't do worse than to call that person a Manichaean. It was an unmentionable word, for it signified a devil-worshipper, an adherent of everything that Christianity deemed evil or negative.

When we speak of Manichaeism we do not so much refer to the actual ideas and doctrines of Mani himself, who lived in the 3rd century A.D., as to the predecessors of Manichaean thinking among the gnostics, who had flourished some 300 years earlier.

Mani, who lived from 215 to 273 A.D., was crucified in Persia under King Bahman II. He was probably the most learned founder of any religious system. But so thorough was the Christian extirpation of Manichaeism, that we would know little about it if it had not been fragmentarily preserved in the writings of the Church fathers. All remains of the gnostics and of Manichaeism were destroyed during the first centuries of Christianity. What has been preserved, except for a few fragments scattered over Africa and Asia, we owe to the writings of such Church Fathers as Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Epiphanius of Cyprus, for since nobody dared to mutilate these almost sacred works, the Manichaean references that they contain have been preserved for us.

Of these fragments, the most considerable is the 66th section of the *Panarion*, or remedy chest, written by Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus, in 375 A.D. This text is a collection of eighty heresies against the Christian church, described and refuted, often violently. Since the work is unknown in English, never having been translated before, and since it is the most important source we have for Manichaeism, it is reproduced here:

The Manichaeans are also called Akuanites after a certain Akua, who came from Mesopotamia and transported these heretical doctrines to Eleutheropolis. They caused a great deal of confusion in their time. They rose in the fourth year of the emperor Aurelian (272-73 A.D.). Their sect has spread in most parts of the entire known world and originated with a certain Manes.

This Manes came from Persia and had formerly the name Kubrikos,

afterwards he adopted the name Manes (which would mean in Greek a maniac) probably by divine providence which thereby wanted to reveal his insanity, though Manes himself did not imply such a meaning. Kubrikos was the slave of a woman who died childless and who left a big fortune to him in her will. She had received this fortune from a slave by name of Terbinthos, called Budda in Assyrian language, who was a slave of Skythianos who was of Saracene origin and had been educated in Arabia, at the frontier of Palestine. This Skythianos studied Greek language and learning and was besides his scholarship, a man of the world. He travelled frequently to India where he had a flourishing trade and on his way came through Thebais. There in the town of Hypsele he fell in love with a woman and married her.

Indulging in leisure he got to think and to talk about many things which were neither taken from the Scripture nor from the Holy Spirit. He started questioning where the inequality of things may come from, as black and white, red and green, humid and dry, heaven and earth, night and day, soul and body, good and bad, just and unjust. He concluded that these contradictory things must have their reason in two antagonistic powers. He got confused over this, added some Pythagorean doctrines and composed four books. The first he called Mysteries, the second Chapters, the third Gospel, and the fourth Treasures. In these books he teaches about the two original Beings, putting them everywhere into parallelism and thought thereby to have introduced novelties. Later on he found out that the prophets and the law hail one eternal originator of all things, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then he decided to travel to Jerusalem, in the time of the Apostles, in order to dispute with the teachers of this doctrine. He started in fact to discuss with the presbyters. However, he could not defeat them and decided to use magic tricks, which he had learned with pagans in India and Egypt. He ascended a roof, threw himself down—and died.

He had stayed in Jerusalem for quite a few years, accompanied only by one single disciple, the before-mentioned Terbinthos, to whom he trusted all his affairs. Terbinthos, after having given a splendid funeral to his master, decided not to return to the woman whom Skythianos had married, but to flee with all his property to Persia. In order not to be recognized he changed his name and called himself Budda. Equipped with Skythianos' wisdom and with his own—he was quite a scholar himself—he now started to dispute with the priests of Mithras, particularly with Parkos and Labdakos. He could not even defeat these idolators. Thus he ascended a roof, just like Skythianos, in order to rid himself by magic from all further contradictions. However, an angel pushed him down so that he died. An old woman, with whom he had stayed, buried him and acquired the ownership of his fortune. She remained for a long time the sole owner of it, as she had no children or relatives. At last she bought as a slave for her personal service Kubrikos, who is also called Manes. When she died she left the unfortunate heritage to him.

Kubrikos, calling himself Manes, spread his message among his ad-

herents and disputed about it. However, he had no success in it and thus considered how he might secure it by magic tricks. Now a rumor spread that the son of the King of Persia was severely afflicted at his place of residence. Manes, who lived somewhere in the country, believed that he might find a remedy for the sickness somewhere in the books of Buddha, who was the heir of Skythianos. Thus he travelled to the capital and promised to help the prince. However, soon after he had given some remedies to him, the prince died in his presence, and Manes was put in shackles on royal orders. In Persia great criminals are not just quickly put to death, but it is the custom first to torture them in manifold ways, before they are allowed to die.

At this time Manes had already collected 22 disciples. Before being taken prisoner, he had equipped three of them with money, Thomas, Hermeas, and Abdas, and had sent them to the Christians in Jerusalem, whose books he had heard of, thinking that he might fare better by adopting the name of a Christian. The three disciples brought back the Christian books, returned to Persia, and gave them to their master, whom they found in prison.

Manes read the books and changed them, mixing his lines with their true doctrine, just as he pleased. In the meantime he managed to get out of prison with the aid of much money and escaped from Persia into Roman territory. When he reached the frontier and the desert, he learned about an honest Christian by the name of Marcellus, who lived at Kaschara in Mesopotamia. He addressed this man in the hope of using him for his own ends in Rome and Syria. The letter he sent from the fort Arabion on the river Stranga, by the hand of Tyrbo, who was one of his disciples.

Marcellus was surprised at the content and language of this letter. It happened that Archelaos, the local bishop, was just then with him. The bishop foamed with rage like a lion, a divine zeal overwhelmed him, and he intended himself to go seize Manichaeus, a man who had come from the berbers. (barbarians). However Marcellus appeased the bishop and suggested that Tyrbo be sent back to Arabion, which is situated between Persia and Mesopotamia. Tyrbo, however, did not want to return to Manichaeus. Thus Marcellus sent an express messenger of his own with the return-message that he did not understand the letter and that the writer should come in person.

Manes became suspicious because Tyrbo did not return, yet all the same he visited Marcellus. Bishop Archelaos advised that Manes should be caught and killed on sight, as one would kill a panther, wolf, or any other beast. Marcellus however thought that one should talk to him peacefully. In Manes' absence, Tyrbo had explained to the two Christians the whole system of Manes: how he accepted two eternal original Beings, antagonistic to each other, one of whom he called light and goodness, the other darkness and evil. These are God and the Devil, whom he sometimes calls both gods, when he talks about a good and a bad god. From these two everything in the world is derived; from the one all good; from

the other, all evil things. One created the soul, the other the body. Not only men have souls, but also animals, birds, snakes, or whatever, even the plants have souls.

Manes invented still other fictions: he who eats meat, eats a soul and will as penalty for doing so become an animal himself. He who eats pork will become a pig. Therefore they eat nothing that comes from animals.

If you plant a fig-tree, your soul will become imprisoned in its branches. The soul is a piece of God, which has torn itself from him to be seized by the antagonistic ruler, or Evil God, and imprisoned into bodies. The good God in his wisdom wanted to gather again the soul which was thus poured out into all created things. He put sun, moon, and stars into the firmament to function as airships to transport the souls into the dwellings of the blessed. That, however, applies only to the souls of those who achieved this knowledge; the others cannot be saved at all.

Manes and his companions arrived after Archelaos had learned about all this through Tyrho, and after he had prepared himself for the refutation of this doctrine. They all gathered immediately in the town of Kaschara in order to carry on their dispute. They had selected four umpires; Marsipus, a pagan scholar, Claudius, a physician, Aegiales, a linguist, and Cleobules, a sophist. These decided in favor of Archelaos and against Manes in the dispute. Manes would have been stoned by the people if Marcellus had not prevented that by his authority. Manes took flight and went to Diodoris, a Karkarian village, where the presbyter Tryphon resided, an honest man, but not much given to disputation. Tryphon wrote to Archelaos, asking for instructions about how to behave towards Manes. Hereupon Archelaos first sent him two books which had been prepared, and then came himself, just at a time when Manes had challenged the good Tryphon to a disputation, to be held at a public place in the village. Tryphon had given the disputation a good start, when suddenly he discovered Archelaos in the crowd. Archelaos continued the discussion and defeated Manes thoroughly. Manes returned to his fort Arabion. The King of Persia heard about this and ordered Manes to be seized in the fort. He was brought to Persia in a humiliating way and there was flayed alive. Persian taxidermists stuffed the body later on and have preserved it to this day.

One of his disciples, by name Hermeas, went to Egypt; he has been known by many people who are still alive. The sect is not very old and I received information about Hermeas from people who had met him.

Abdas went into the upper countries. Thomas went to Judaea. These were the men who spread the sect, which is still alive.

Manes also taught that he was the Spirit, the Comforter; at other times he called himself an apostle of Christ. Here ends our account of the life of Manes.

Manes' doctrine is propounded in his Book on Faith. He has written several books, one of which is divided into 22 chapters according to the letters of the Syrian alphabet. For many Persians use the Syrian letters as well as the Persian, just as many people use Greek letters besides their

own. Many use Palmyrian in particular, which is considered the most distinguished Syrian dialect. One of the parts of the Book on Faith is called *Mysteries*, another one *Treasure*. Manes wrote besides a so-called *Smaller-Treasure*, and also a book about *Astrology*, for Manichaeans are concerned about such things. They also wear amulets and use magic spells.

Manes starts his Book on Faith thus: In the beginning were God and Matter, light and darkness, good and evil, completely antagonistic to each other, and they had nothing in common. This is how this fakir starts and he continues with verbosity. Here one can already imagine what follows. The passage just quoted is pagan and it is not difficult to refute it. For if those two powers are simultaneous they cannot be different at all, not even in name, because whatever is simultaneous with God must also be co-eternal. That which is co-eternal must have always existed and cannot have its reason in anything else. That however is God himself by definition.

Manes divided light and darkness not only in name but also in essence. If they were truly divided and existed separately, both would also be finite and none of them perfect, whether they limit each other indirectly or directly. It follows that one would have to assume an intermediate power and thus teach not only two, but three or four original Beings.

The wicked Manes pretends that he does not want to confuse God with evil. The doctrine of the Church, however, does not do that either. For the evil has neither existed forever nor has it been created by God. The evil does not even have a substance of its own but is only produced in the course of our activities. Evil cannot be without action, but that which men can avoid to bring into existence cannot possibly offer efficient resistance to God. The Devil was not evil in his origin or in his destiny.

Manes identifies matter and decay, without realizing that thus they cannot possibly be eternal. If Manes would have been the Spirit, the Comforter, he would thereby make the Saviour a liar, because Christ promised it to his disciples, who would then obviously not have received it as they all died before the Persian Manes arose. For the generation of apostles has passed away; it lasted from the days of Peter to the days of Paul and John, who lived until the time of Trajan. James, the first bishop of Jerusalem and brother of the Lord, has died. He was a son of Joseph like some others whom Joseph had from his real wife. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was born in the flesh of Mary, the pure virgin, was familiar with these men and treated them as his brothers. The same is true as to Simon, the brother of his father Joseph, the son of Cleophas. One hundred and seven years have elapsed from Manes to the present time, which is the 13th year of Valens, the 9th of Gratian, the 1st of the young Valentinian. That means that this heresy originated in the 4th year of Aurelian, when Hymenaeus was Bishop of Jerusalem, and then spread.

We do not have to go into details in refuting this sect, because that has already been done in the books of such excellent writers as Archelaos,



Origenes too, as far as I have been told, Eusebius, the one of Caesarea, and also the Emesenian, Serapion of Thmuis, Athanasius of Alexandria, George of Laodicea, Apollinarius of Laodicea, Titus, and others.

I shall now proceed to quote the doctrine of Manes literally from the book of Archelaos, just as he learned it from the before mentioned Tyrho. Manes says:

There are two unborn, self-originating, eternal Gods, antagonistic to each other. One of them introduced the good, the other the evil. One of them is called Light, the other Darkness. The soul of man is a part of Light, the body a part of Darkness, as also everything else in the realm of matter. A certain mixture of Light and Darkness however occurred in the same way in which two hostile kings invading each other's territory obtain each time something of the other's property. Darkness fought in this way against Light, trespassing beyond its borderlines. When the good Father realized how Darkness settled in his earth, he produced a certain power, the so-called Mother of Life. She in turn produced the first man and also the five elements: wind, light, water, fire, and matter. Man went down to fight Darkness, clothed in these elements as in a coat of armor. The ruler of Darkness however fought back and ate his armor (i.e., his soul). Thus Man down below was terribly tortured by Darkness. But the Father granted his prayer and sent down another power which he produced, the Living Spirit, who gave his right hand to man and guided him out of Darkness. Otherwise the first man would have stayed in captivity and peril ever since. But Man had to leave his soul below.

In remembrance of this event the Manichaeans shake hands wherever they meet, indicating thereby that they consider themselves men rescued from Darkness, which still keeps all other sects.

Thereupon the Living Spirit created the world. He carried three other powers, went down and guided the rulers away, putting them into the firmament which is their abode and their circle.

The Living Spirit also created the lights and caused the firmament to revolve. He also created this earth in eight layers. The carrier of the axis supports the earth from below. Whenever he gets tired he begins to shake, thus causing earthquakes now and then.

The good Father sent his son out of his lap into the midst of the earth and into its lowest parts, so that he would help, whenever the supporter of the axis trembles and when he puts the burden over to the other side.

Afterwards Matter originated the plants out of itself. When the plants were stolen by some of the rulers, Matter called forth an assembly of the most noble of them and took one power from each of them. Out of these powers Matter created man, after the image of the primordial Man, and imprisoned a soul in him. That is the origin of this mixture.

When the Father of Life saw how the soul was tortured in the body, he sent his son, in pity and compassion, in order to save the soul. He sent him because of this task, but also because of the supporter of the axis.

When the son came, he transferred himself into man, appearing as a man to men, though he was not really a man. But they believed him to



have really become a man. He constructed an engine of twelve buckets, which are turned around by the globe and lift up the souls of the dead. These souls are seized by the rays of the light which cleanses them and turns them over to the moon, whose sphere is filled with them. For the two lights are freighters. If the moon has become full, one shipload of souls is sent further on and the moon will receive new ones with the help of the before mentioned dredging engine.

Every soul, every living being has something of the nature of the good Father in it, and after the moon has transported the souls to the paternal aeons they remain in the Pillar of Splendor, which is also called the perfect air. For the air is a pillar of light in which the souls are purified and through which they are sustained.

The origin of death is explained in this way: a certain beautiful woman who attracts the rulers in the firmament by her shape, hides, whenever they try to seize her. Thereupon the rulers are maddened and one of them spreads peril and pestilence on the earth.

The soul is transferred through five different bodies, just as if poured from one vessel into another. This world is the paradise, the plants in it are the seducing lusts. The true knowledge is Jesus. Whoever receives him is able to distinguish good and evil. The world is not the creation of God but is made of a part of Matter; therefore everything will perish. That which the rulers have robbed from the first Man is what now fills the moon and is purified there. If, however, a soul leaves without having acquired knowledge, it is given over to the demons, so as to be humbled in the pit of fire. After that it is cast into bodies for punishment, and that means it is cast into the Great Fire until completion.

As to our prophets, the Manichaeans say that there arose an evil spirit from the beginning, who seduced them to their teachings. This evil spirit deluded the minds of the prophets, and he who follows their doctrines is lost eternally. Manes gave certain rules governing food-restrictions only to his seven elect ones.

Here ends the quotation from Archelaos' records. The Manichaeans one might say refute themselves through the many contradictions in their doctrine. Sometimes Mani says that the world was made by God, sometimes by rulers without God having any part in it. Sometimes he calls the firmament the skin of the worldrulers, sometimes he says that they were crucified in the upper regions, and then again that they are running around driven by impure desires.

Manes says that all souls are equal, and even more: there is really only one soul in man, animals, and plants, even in the seeds of the plants. Such statements obviously do not agree with the Gospel. Otherwise the Savior would have come partly for the sake of animals when he came to save men. Sick people, afflicted with all kinds of diseases, were brought to him, also those possessed by demons, but never any animals.

On the contrary, we are told that he made a whole herd of pigs throw themselves into the seas. One of the Manichaeans said to that: indeed, but it was good for them in this way to be freed of their bodies. Why

then did he call back Lazarus from death, whom he loved? For Lazarus did not die again right away. It is proved by old records that he was thirty years old when the Savior revived him, and that he lived afterwards another thirty years.

Manes affirms furthermore that the two testaments are opposed to each other and that the God of the Law is another than the God of the Gospel. Therefore he calls the first one the ruler, the second one however, the Son of his Father, the Good God. How many passages could be quoted to show that the Old Testament testifies of the Saviour and (v.v.) the apostles quote the Old Testament.

Furthermore, if really, as Manes teaches, body and soul were created by different gods how should we explain the exact parallelism of those two parts of man? The rulers are said to have swallowed the soul, but then again to have imprisoned it into a body. Manes' doctrines about the mother of life, about the elements, about the Living Spirit who gave his right hand to man, are such silly doctrines that it is not even necessary to refute them carefully.

If we follow Manes' ideas, the stars would have been created before the advent of the Saviour, and men would not have existed before either. One could not even say that he truly arrived, as he came only in appearance, in Manes' opinion. Equally ridiculous is the story about the moon—whoever should have filled the moon before men started dying? His explanation of the paradise, which he confuses with the world, does not agree with the Bible, where we are told that it is not the trees which represent the seductive powers of lust, but the serpent, who seduced Eve.

As to the doctrine of metempsychosis, the wandering of the soul, Manes must have taken it from Plato or Zeno or some other pagan philosopher. Nature has its limitations and keeps to them, and no creature can ever change into another. Furthermore, the creation of man is according to the scripture certainly an immediate act of God, whatever Manes says about it.

After all, what can one expect of a man who calls him who talked through the law and the prophets a prince of darkness! The Saviour himself held the Mosaic institutions in honor and testified that he had come not to destroy the law, but to uphold it. It is true that God is served in the New Testament in a somewhat different way than he is in the Old. However, the Old Testament gives orders to servants, the New one to children.

Manes teaches that finally the world will be destroyed and that everything will be dissolved once more into the good and the bad God. Not even this is true. For either the same struggle would start again between the two, or else the bad God would change his mind and repent.

Manes keeps quoting the Scripture and tries to prove his point by it. E.g. he quotes in his favour the word of the Saviour: A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . Therefore by their fruits shall ye know them (Matt. 7:18). However, the corrupt tree is not self-originated and is not eternal, but somebody has planted it! This passage has to be understood, in any event,

as referring to good and evil actions. E.g. nothing good can result from adultery, nothing bad from pious chastity.

Manes quotes also John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father thereof.

By this passage he tries to prove that the creator of heaven and earth was the father of the Devil. But then, of course, their souls could not possibly have been produced by a heavenly power, as he thinks they are. Even Abraham, from whom the Jews are derived, would then be a son of the Devil. However, the Saviour said: "You are not children of Abraham, but of your father the Devil.

The sentence which opens the Gospel of John equally cannot be turned in his favor: John 1:5 And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

For Manes believes in the contrary that the darkness did apprehend or seize the light. Anyway, what is meant here is something different, namely the light of divine guidance. Even in the parable of the seed and the weed (Matt. 13-24) no particular substance of the evil is presupposed, and the good seed stands for man as a whole and not only for the soul—Manes on the contrary trying to show that the soul only is derived from the good God.

Expressions like these: the prince of this world, the God of this world, the whole world lieth in the evil one, *etc.*, do not mean what Manes tries to find in them, otherwise the belly would be a god just as well as the devil, as the apostle Phil. 3:19 speaks of people whose god is the belly!

This heretic has very much to say against the God of the Old Testament, *e.g.* that he permitted the Egyptians to be robbed, that he introduced sacrifices, that he instigated murder and evil passions, *etc.*

However God was a just judge as far as the Egyptians are concerned. He did not order sacrifices for his own sake, but in order to wean away the people from idolatry. Later on, when the service of the one and only God was firmly established among the people the order was changed to read: To what purpose cometh there to me frankincense from Sheba—and again: Will I eat the flesh of the bulls? It is just the God of the Old Testament who has forbidden covetousness: thou shalt not covet! And it has been said in the same connection: thou shalt not kill, and just in order to prevent killing has the Lord ordered to kill the killer.

These are only a few samples, which however clearly demonstrate the spirit of Manes' opinion and proofs. Among the pagans he appears as a pagan, worshipping sun, moon, stars, and demons. He knows the arts of the Magi and praises the astrologers—and he accepted Christ our Lord only in name.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frederic Spiegelberg, trans., *The Shadow of the Soul*.

From this work, as from other sources, we can reconstruct the Manichaean system. It commences with a grandiose cosmology. Everywhere we look we see the father of light and the divine light itself, except for a small, dark, cone-shaped mountain peak that rises out of nowhere on the nether horizon, and seems a thing of little importance. Somehow the father of light, or Ahura Masdao, is annoyed by the very existence of this tiny morsel of blackness beneath him, which represents a potential danger, for it might erupt like a volcano against him; it has potential strength. It would be better to destroy it, therefore, while it is still puny. In order to destroy it, the Father of Light has to project himself, or to create some power capable of fighting. So out of himself he sends forth a second godhead, his own female creative energy personified as the Mother of Life, for while the Godhead was alone he could not be said to be creative. With the help of the mother-energy he makes a primordial son, a personage not yet an earthly man, but the idea of a man, Gayomart.

Gayomart is sent out into darkness to destroy the mountain and thus remove the potential danger that threatens from beneath. For this task he is equipped with the five light elements that belong to the father of all greatness; ether, light, wind, water, and fire, the basic elements of Vedic and Zoroastrian tradition. These surround Gayomart like armor and are his weapons. As Gayomart descends into the depths, he is immediately overwhelmed by demons, or powers of darkness, who begin to eat the five elements. Thus ends what might be called the first act of the cosmic drama as taught by Mani.

The father of light is defeated and overwhelmed, and he has to save Gayomart and the five powers of light. To accomplish this end he creates once more. His second son is Mithra, the sun hero, a name also to be found in Vedic tradition, and, at the time of Manes, the object of a widespread military cult in the Roman world. The Father of Light creates Mithra with twelve divine guardians, who stand for the signs of the zodiac. They surround him with beautiful shining colors, and they appear to the demons of the underworld either as beautiful girls, or, in one rendering of the Church fathers, as beautiful boys, whichever, depending upon the culture, may be the most alluring to demonic males.

Mithra steps down into the depths, reaches out his right hand,

and rescues Gayomart. Because of this rescue, states Mani, we all shake hands when we approach each other and when we say good-bye, in memory of the sun hero who rescued the soul of man out of darkness. Gayomart is rescued, but he is absolutely naked, for the five elements that were his armor have been swallowed by the demons of darkness. In other words, he is without his outer self, which has been destroyed by the powers of the dark. So now, we might say, in Indian terms, the atman of Gayomart has been rescued, but his lower self has been lost. So the victory of Mithra is not a complete victory, for the rescue of the atman is not a complete rescue of the complete self.

The scene is now set for the third act. Obviously the five light elements have to be rescued if Gayomart is to be complete again; and for this purpose the Father of Greatness, or Light, creates the cosmos as we know it, the sky and the earth. He creates them out of the bodies of the demons whom Mithra has slain and who have digested the five light elements. Thus whatever we touch in this world is satanic in matter and basically demonic, yet contains the divine five light elements. This duality includes literally everything, even our own bodies. So this world is the exact reverse of the Hindu cosmos in which everything bears the divine imprint of Vishnu. This world created out of the dead demons might be likened to an immense distillation machine, the purpose of which is purification of all matter, first in the moon, and then in the sun, where they are dissolved and cleansed; the light that has been absorbed in darkness is liberated and ascends back to the Father of Light, and the darkness that is innate in matter falls back to the underworld. It is for this reason that, as far away in time and place as later Shinto, fertilizers are forbidden, as containing the dross element.

The process must go on for a long time before all that digested light is reclaimed, but the Father of Greatness can look forward, even so, to the day when all the light that has been reclaimed can join the superior light above, and all the dross has been incinerated and let fall back into darkness.

Thus ends the third act of the spiritual drama. In the fourth the demon of darkness, the poison god, has roused himself at last and realizes what is going on. He sees that what was his victory will turn into defeat if the process of distillation goes on forever, so he himself produces a son out of his own power, and so creates Adam,

or Man. Thus all men are creatures of the devil, rather than of God. Mani would say, in contradistinction to Confucius' sentence "Man's nature is good," that man's nature is bad. Mani thus claims that the Old Testament tale of Jehovah creating Adam is precisely the story of the father of darkness creating man in his image. Jehovah, the father of darkness, in Mani's language, tells Abraham: procreate, create many men like you, let them spread and be as numerous as the stars in Heaven; for the greater the number of men created, the longer the distillation process will take; and indeed, it will never come to an end. By means of propagation, evil will always be shackled to the world.

The Father of Greatness has to interfere once more, lest he be defeated by the creation of Man. So in the fifth act the Father of Light creates a third son, who is Jesus Christ. His duty is to destroy the works of Jehovah, or the Power of Darkness, Ahriman.

Jesus is sent to instruct Adam and to enlighten him:

When I was a little child,  
 And dwelling in my kingdom in my Father's house,  
 And in the wealth and the glories  
     of my nurturers had my pleasure,  
 From the East, our home,  
 My parents, having equipped me, sent me forth.  
 .....  
 And they took off from me the bright robe,  
 Which in their love they had wrought for me,  
 And my purple toga,  
 Which was measured and woven to my stature.  
 And they made a compact with me,  
 And wrote it in my heart that it should not be forgotten:  
 "If thou goest down into Egypt,  
 And bringest the one pearl,  
 Which is in the midst of the sea  
 Hard by the loud-breathing serpent,  
 Then shalt thou put on thy bright robe  
     and thy toga, which is laid over it,  
 And with thy brother, our next in rank,  
 Thou shalt be heir in our kingdom."  
 .....  
 . . . I betook me straight to the serpent,  
 Hard by his dwelling I abode,  
 Waiting till he should slumber and sleep,  
     and I could take my pearl from him.  
 .....



They perceived that I was not their countryman;  
 So they dealt with me treacherously. . . .  
 I forgot that I was a son of kings;  
     and I served their king;  
     and I forgot the pearl. . . .

.....  
 My parents perceived and were grieved for me. . . .  
 So they wove a plan on my behalf. . . .

.....  
 So I remembered that I was a son of kings,  
 And my free soul longed for its natural state

.....  
     and I snatched away the pearl,  
 And turned to go back to my Father's house.  
 And their filthy and unclean garb  
 I stripped off and left it in their country,  
     and I took my way straight to come  
 To the light of our home, the East.

.....  
 It (his robe) was spreading itself out towards me,  
 And in the hands of its givers  
 It hastened that I might take it.  
 And me too my love urged on  
 That I should run to meet it and receive it. . . .<sup>2</sup>

This Hymn of the Soul is a semi-Manichaean psalm that tells us of Jesus' instruction to Adam to enlighten him, of Man who has been reminded of his task of purification. We are led to believe that many of the apocryphal gospels are of Gnostic and Pre-Manichaean origin. It was not until relatively late in Church history that these Manichaean or Manichaeized gospels were excluded from the Holy Canon. In the so-called Gospel of the Egyptians, for example, Jesus does many things that he also does in the gospels; things that are canonical, but he also says, among other things, "I have come to dissolve the female work that is generation." An underlying anti-sexual bias has accompanied the history of faith ever since Manichaeism first enounced its cosmology.

According to Mani, the rescue of the five elements of light from matter (i.e., the digestive systems of the slain demons) is the entire meaning of history and of creation. Man, whose nature is intrinsically evil and who is a creature of the devil, has been enlightened

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from J. Armitage Robinson, ed., *The Hymn of the Soul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), pp. 11-29.

by the good god, or Father of Light, who has given him an additional soul, or stimulation to fight against his own evil nature and so be rescued. In the system of Mani, and this is its primary virtue, man is not a passive object of salvation, but must himself help God to save the light. Indeed the anguished cry of the soul, its desire to be liberated, has been definitely overstressed in recent centuries, both in Christianity and in other religions, and is neither the only, nor the highest source of religious thought. Man, in Mani's as in Zoroaster's system, is a helper of the good or God principle, despite his own nature, and the outcome of the battle depends upon him. Nor is the outcome certain, nor does it come soon.

To be sure, Manichaeism also has an eschatology, or doctrine of final things, one which is largely taken from Zoroastrianism. This doctrine tells us of a world fire that lasts 100 years and will bring about the ultimate separation of light from darkness, in which the latter will be burnt to ashes, if man cooperates with God strongly enough to bring the fire about. If man discontinues procreation, and so provides no new evil material for the distillation machine to distill, then ultimately there will be only light on one side and a heap of burnt-out darkness on the other. We may ask if this idea is not pessimistic, insofar as we return to the picture of the cosmos drawn in the first act; but we must remember that the cone of darkness at the bottom of the world of light will then be burned out and incapable of becoming vital or dangerous again, being now inert. However, it is not transformed into glory. The whole parable is perhaps less pessimistic than realistic, for nothing can be filtered or consumed utterly. It always leaves a residue. If we can assure that the residue will be inert, that is the most that we can accomplish.

The influence of this worldview and moral framework has been and still is very strong. Christianity only half-rejected Manichaeism, extirpating it consciously, but absorbing much of it subconsciously. Thus the Gospel according to John begins with a statement that is reactionary to the Gnostic or Pre-Manichaean world: "And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it." To a world that believed that darkness had digested the light, as the Gnostics who preceded the Manichaeans believed, this was a bold and original statement. So the new doctrine of Christianity was that the dark did not imprison the light.

Wherever Manichaeism traveled, it brought about a radicaliza-

tion of ethical doctrines, presenting the extremes of dualism. Buddhism introduced ascetic practices under the impact of Manichaeism, and similar results are traceable even in China and Japan. In Tibet the ancient sacrificial religion of Bon had a revival, to the extent that child murder and holy abortion were practiced, in order to put an end to procreation. Celibacy in the Christian Church may well have a similar root; and in the 19th century the Shakers followed the same principles, as did many revivalistic sects. In the Tantric sects of India we can see how the extreme dualism of some of the Indian philosophic systems provided fertile ground for an invading Manichaeism, and probably the Nestorian Christians in the East accomplished much the same thing, with their emphasis upon rescuing the higher nature at the expense of the lower.

In the Christian Middle Ages, the Troubadour movement developed a form of love-making divorced from procreation or, for that matter, intercourse. It reflected a Catharist or Manichaean root, and was considered by the Church as a demonic counterfeit of Holy Writ. The Catholic tradition that sex is permissible if the chance of procreation exists, but otherwise is not permissible, was turned around by the Manichaean prophets to say that sex is permissible so long as procreation is prevented. Thus arose an infinitude of squabbles, which continue today in such essential matters as birth control.

Today Manichaeism exists nowhere as a confessed or practiced religion or cult, but it has conquered the subconscious of modern man. It arises from any investigation of the subconscious, psychoanalytical or otherwise; and having been for centuries under repression, it has generated an enormous force. For example, how much of Puritan, rigorous ethic is Christian; based upon the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and how much is based upon Mani; upon a fear of the body, the instincts, and the nature inclinations of Man, a belief that his essential nature is not good, but evil, a nature that must be destroyed, insofar as it cannot be transmuted.

Christianity survived because it was literally driven underground, where it developed and gathered strength and accumulated to itself an impenetrable mystery. Manichaeism has survived by much the same process, for the unknowable has a stronger grip on our minds than has the knowable. But we may well ask ourselves which of the two survives primarily today: are we Christians with a

Manichaeism subconscious, or Manichaeism with a Christian subconscious? Let us hope the latter, for if our Christian side is suppressed, then perhaps it is gathering strength before emerging into the open again.

In our popular culture we certainly pay more attention to the dark and dangerous aspect of the psychiatrically-defined mother image than to any other principle. A glance at movie trailers, sadistic best sellers, or 25-cent reprint covers would assure us of that. That is the image we see most, and for which we atone on Sundays, if we go to church. But it is possible that the balance might be reversed. Perhaps we should not dismiss Manichaeism as an altogether demonic cult, for it expresses a side of the human personality that, if it is not the whole of human personality, is nonetheless ever-present. It at least reminds us that attainment of enlightenment can never be easy, smooth, or calm, but is always attended by utmost difficulty.

## 20.

# CHRISTIANITY

JESUS IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID "BUT LET YOUR SPEECH BE yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil." (Matthew 5:37)

This saying refers to Man's major decision about his commitment to the Divine, but does not apply to everyday speech. We know of no Christian sect that has misunderstood these words to mean that one should never say anything but yes and no, without any qualifications. Nothing is unadulterated.

We may say that the Americanness of an American does not inhere in whether he is born an American or naturalized one, but in a host of predominantly psychological matters of identification and outlook, to the point where a birthright American may be less American in essence than a naturalized one. The same applies to the quality and condition of our religious adherence and belief. Thus it is difficult for a Buddhist to define precisely what Buddhism is, though whether he is a follower of Mahayana or Hinayana, he is equally a Buddhist.

We have quoted Coomaraswamy's remark to the effect that the less one knows of Hinduism and Buddhism the easier it is to state the difference between them; but the more one knows, the less easy it becomes to do so. We all tend to accept a mere aspect of something for its nature, which is often quite different from its appearance. A faith is never its doctrines, and its doctrines do not quite add up to the nature of the faith. So it is with all the abstractions of which the human mind is capable. The ultimate concepts of Man are undefinable. Only their specific expression can be stated.

One of the benefits of comparative theology is that it demonstrates to us the partial nature of any truth we may investigate,

whether we accept that truth or reject it. A prolonged study of the special aspects of a faith may do much to destroy one's belief in it, until eventually one realizes that the aspects are only aspects, and have little to do with the central core of belief itself.

Some would therefore feel that to investigate one's own faith, which for so many of us is Christianity, may be dangerous either to the study of comparative religion, or to us. If we say we are Christian, we usually mean that we belong to some particular sect of Christianity, as well as that we are Christian in essence. We are not here concerned with the various sects, but with the general shape of Christianity itself.

There are those who would say that there is no place for Christianity in a book on comparative religions, since we are all Christians anyway. There are those who on the contrary would say that Christianity is a fulcrum to the subject, since it is the religion we have in hand, and also because it is the quintessence of many other faiths, by reason of its synthetic character. But on the whole it is the fashion in works on comparative religion to leave Christianity out, since it touches upon too many issues variously vital to the reader, thus making it difficult to take an impartial view of the general subject. The subject of Christianity has been so minutely discussed, both textually and on points of doctrine, and from so many viewpoints, that it is almost impossible to make any statement that would be certain in the sense that it would be universally acceptable. Yet, from the viewpoint of comparative religion, Christianity is a religion among others, not above others, and so it must be examined in its place.

Definition of Christianity, if it is to be generally valid, is virtually impossible, for the faith is too manifold, so that any individual definition is apt to be one-sided, and therefore wrong. This difficulty of definition does not apply only to Christianity. Most of the world civilizations are in a very late state of development, so that all the isms have been defined so often and with such great shifts in the meaning of terms, through process of time, that their definitions have become meaningless through overuse.

Those who have attempted to define Christianity have been emphatic in stating that it is to be distinguished by its doctrine of incarnation. Unfortunately, though this definition is valid in comparison with most other faiths, it breaks down when we examine the





All' Ill.<sup>ma</sup> S.<sup>a</sup> Co: Nicolo Calderini Vno de S.<sup>a</sup> Confal.  
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E Priore nella Comp.<sup>a</sup> del S.<sup>a</sup> Rosario di Bologna.

Voglii S.<sup>a</sup> D.D.

B. N. C. F.

faiths of India, where the avatar is essential to the mythology. In a talk with the author, Ananda Coomaraswamy not only rejected the claim that Christianity is unique in its doctrine of incarnation, but provided a lengthy enumeration of the parallels to be found in India.

Indeed, almost all definitions break down. Most of the words of Jesus or paraphrases and parallels of them can be found in contemporaneous rabbinical literature. The patriarchs and theologians of the first Christian centuries copied, or provided equivalents to, the philosophical statements of the Hellenistic world. At the time of its inauguration, Christianity was only one of dozens of fervent sects; the Gnostic, the Manichaean, Mithraism, the Essenic and the Mandaic, to name only a few. The more we study their doctrines, the less we are able to find any specific message in Christianity that cannot also be found in one or another of these sects. We are puzzled to discover why it was that Christianity succeeded, where these other creeds did not.

The English essayist, Walter Bagehot, once remarked that you must "Reconcile what you have to say with green peas, for green peas are certain." In short, no theological discussion is pertinent unless it is congruent with the facts. And the facts would seem to be that Christianity succeeded, not by reason of its ethical doctrine, but because it alone among the religions of its time of origin insisted upon the historical basis of its creed. None of the other contemporaneous creeds cared about, or paid any attention to, the factual datableness of their messiah or original prophet. Northrup, in his *Meeting of East and West*, strongly stresses the radically different

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#### PLATE TWENTY-THREE

The history of all religions shows a changing emphasis upon the male and female attributes of the Divine. Jewish patriarchal and Hellenistic matriarchal tendencies led to a permanent struggle for male and female predominance in Christian symbolism. After extensive Medieval worship of the Virgin Mary, Protestantism re-expressed the tremendum and ruled out the Virgin as an object of piety. The recent revival of Mary worship in the Catholic Church, culminating in the Pope's announcement of the new dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin, has been considered by the psychologist C. G. Jung as a triumph of Catholicism. Protestantism, from this viewpoint, leaves its female adherents without a female equivalent in Heaven, after which the world of mundane realities is patterned.

time senses of the Orient and the Occident. The Orient sees time roughly as a vast wheel in which nothing is wholly lost because it will come up again in about the same position, as the wheel revolves. The Occident sees time as a straight line with an irrevocable past, and with every event upon it occupying a fixed point in relation to all other possible events. On the straight line every event is unique, because unrepeatable. On the Oriental wheel it is not. In the West events can happen only once. In the Orient they can happen an infinite number of times. Thus the precise nature of each sharply-defined unique event has enormous importance to the West. To the East it has not, for nothing is ever totally lost there. To the West, therefore, the Absolute not only inhabits time, but it can scarcely fail to do so. Whereas to the Orient the Absolute, though it interpenetrates time, is never a unique event permanently localized there.

Thus it was, at least subconsciously, of extreme importance to the West that the validity of religious experience be established as an absolute by rooting it firmly in an historic event. And among the competing faiths of the day, only Christianity did find this historical reference point. Its stubbornness about the specific historic datability of Jesus Christ is what sets it apart from other messianic or prophetic creeds. It is true that with the process of time some other faith might have satisfied this basic requirement, but no other did. And though Hinduism, for example, also had incarnation claims, unique incarnation was a doctrine impossible to the Oriental mind, because of its circular time concept. The time concept of the pre-Christian West was already linear, and so the uniqueness claim was thoroughly acceptable to the European mind of that day. Since every event in the West can happen only once, and since Christianity was stubborn in maintaining the datability of Jesus, then once that datability was accepted, no other alternative became possible to its adherents.

The specific historicity of Jesus as a man, however, raised the problem of the Two Nature doctrine. The best minds of the first 500 years of Christianity wrestled with the problem of reconciling the Divine and the human aspects of Jesus.

The theologians who followed the Hellenistic tradition of the Logos, for instance Philo and St. John, and who therefore believed in a prime mover who was abstract and ethical, the equivalent of

the Hindu shakti, or female energy principle without which creation was impossible, emphasized the divine nature of Jesus Christ so strongly that they even came to deny the reality of his incarnation. According to them, the Logos, as the western equivalent of the Tat, or Suchness, the Being of Being, can have no embodiment. Therefore Logos theologians stated that it was not the Son who had been martyred on the cross, but the Father: the doctrine of patripassionism. They claimed that the Son was a mirage, and that the ultimate Divine could not be said to enter a body in any way. These extremists, following the doctrine called Doketism, were excluded as heretics.

On the other hand, the theologians who emphasized the human nature of Jesus Christ at the cost of denying the reality of incarnation (chiefly the Ebionites, or followers of Ebion, in the 1st century A.D.) were equally heretical and were as quickly excluded as the Doketists.

During the 4th century A.D. the conflict between the paramountly divine and the paramountly human nature of Jesus Christ clustered around Athanasius of Alexandria and Arius of Antioch. The final solution of this specific problem was reached at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., where it was stated that the Divine and human natures of Jesus Christ were unconfused and undivided, a solution not to be thought of as a mere synthesis, but one that cleverly excluded dangers of heresy on both sides; since if Jesus Christ contained equal elements of both, then the heresy of denying one by over-emphasizing the other aspect could not be committed. If these two natures were unconfused, the formulation excluded the dangerous extreme of deifying man; if the two natures were undivided, it excluded the equally dangerous course of transcendentalism. So in its structure this formulation solved the need for a paradoxical symbol that could convey at one and the same time both the absolute existence of the Being of Being, and the expression of that Being in the shadow realm of this world, without confusing the nature of either, and expressed both as aspects by the process of dialectic interrelation.

Wherever in Christian history this dialectic was lost sight of, we discover numerous sects splitting off, all of them heresies either on one extreme or the other.

By stating that the Divine and human elements in Jesus Christ

were unconfused and undivided, the Church found it possible to put forward the claim of uniqueness, and to maintain that Jesus Christ was the only possible preordained incarnation, with a specific historic existence. And as we have seen, it was this historicity that enabled Christianity to carry the victory over other synthetic creeds and tendencies that existed at the time of its birth.

In the words of St. Augustine, "What is now called the Christian religion already existed among the ancients and was not lacking at the very beginnings of the human race. When Christ appeared in the flesh the true religion already in existence received the name of Christian." Every religion, as it becomes established, fabricates a long historical existence for itself. Or rather, it would be better to say that it reflects itself back through time. But to take an example, though Buddhism developed the theory that other Buddhas had existed long before Gautama Buddha, neither it nor any other religion claimed that Buddhists existed long before the appearance of the Buddha, or that any body of adherents could pre-exist Prophetic revelation. According to those who agreed with St. Augustine, however, there were Christians long before the birth of Christ. This viewpoint, since dropped, allowed the Church to assimilate and make use of the content of the cultural tradition of the pagan world, so that, by accepting them as pre-Christians, it could utilize the influential philosophical systems of Plato, and later of Aristotle, in order to adapt Christianity to the temperament and mental training of the Roman world.

Among Christians today these early statements about the Church are long forgotten. It was the theologian Adolf von Harnack, in the 19th century, who stirred minds anew with his unprecedentedly popular and influential book, *What is Christianity?*, in which he analyzed the actual beliefs of Christianity, and found them to be decidedly two-fold. He made it clear that, if we take the name or title Christ as symbolic of the Divine nature, and the proper name Jesus as symbolic of the human nature of the person whom Christianity regards as its messiah, then modern Christians are decidedly divided into Christ believers and Jesus believers.

The millions who state their Christianity to be a belief in Jesus, usually termed liberal Christians, and who emphasize the teachings, human traits, and moral doctrines of Jesus, stand on one side; and those who emphasize belief in Christ and follow the so-called

orthodox tradition of Christian theology, stand on the other. If they go so far as to call themselves fundamentalists, they are actually following a rather recent heresy. For fundamentalism, which appeals to a tradition of ancient practices and ideas, cannot exist until a tradition of ancient practices and ideas exists, and so it must always be of late occurrence.

Ultimately most theological leaders today agree that neither belief in the human personality of Jesus, nor belief in the Divine reality of Christ, constitutes an historically valid Christian religion. In other words, Christianity, in view of its claim to the uniqueness of a datable historical incarnation, is the only religion whose founder *has* to bear a double name, for to speak of one name or the other vitiates the double nature, and so the essential meaning, of Christianity itself.

On the basis of new insights, arrived at after the period of Harnack, neither part of this double nature can be omitted. For those who follow only the Jesus concept expressed in the early Gospels of Mark and Matthew are Ebionite heretics, in that they deny the Divine nature; and those who follow the Christ concept of St. Paul and the Gospel of John, and so deny the human nature, fall into the opposite heresy.

The recent theological discovery of the historical cause of the Christian victory over competing sects (the discovery that, in view of the specific datability of Jesus, parallels to Jesus in rabbinical tradition and parallels to the Christ concept in Hellenistic philosophy do not mitigate against the uniqueness claim of Christianity) has today developed a new mode of expression in "dialectical theology." "Dialectical theology" utilizes existentialist philosophy as a symbolic means of expression.

Existentialism agrees with traditional Christianity in its insistence that universal ideas and generalities cannot in themselves establish the value of revelation. The revelation that comes from the meeting of God and Man is on the contrary an advent. This advent is often construed as an "adventure" in faith, which is a peripheral understanding of the term advent. An advent implies an encounter of two personalities of realities taking place in the here and now, a true necessitous encounter that theologians call an historical event, the sharp shock of the moment when Man becomes aware of the presence, and is opened to the nature, of God.



A great danger lies within the here and now formulation, but it does make it possible for modern theology to re-emphasize the basic tenets of Christianity, those of the datable and unique incarnation. But since the here and now is based on a logically forbidden double meaning of the term history as: 1. the here and now, and 2. as the continuum of happenings in time, it cannot be considered as a durable cornerstone for an indestructible proof of the Divine. At best it is a brilliant and convenient insight, but as a device it belongs to the field of apologetics, not to that of dialectical proof.

At any rate, we have seen that the one thing we can be certain of, from the viewpoint of observers of the history of religion, is that Christianity is unique among the religions of the world in this insistence upon the datability of Jesus Christ, and through this datableness it was able to conquer the European mind by appealing to its demand for factual certainty. "Reconcile what you have to say with green peas, for green peas are certain." Because of the differing concepts of time, the East produced no such datable certainty; the West, on the other hand, could have accepted nothing else.

This datability produced the problem of the human and Divine nature of Jesus Christ, which in turn produced the dogma of the unconfused and undivided double nature of Jesus Christ. And it is this double nature that provides the cornerstone of the Christian edifice, and the keystone of its theology.

Thus, too, we can interpret the symbol of the cross, the dominating symbol of Christianity, as the wheel is of Eastern religions. To a system based upon a circular or spiral time concept, or appealing to it and acceptable to it because congruent with it, the wheel is a natural symbol. But a wheel is self-contained, and so provides certainty. To the linear concept of time of the West, certainty can be provided only by anchoring events in time. The positive vertical time line of the West must be bisected by the negative horizontal line that defines the course of events by cutting off the endless flow of time at a datable, markable point, and so giving us the certainty of irrevocable definition. Without that fixed point of reference, we would wander lost in time. No symbol can be free of idolatry, unless it carries its destruction or limitation within itself. It must be prevented from expanding into the area of the unknowable Being of Being that is the true goal of faith, but with which it must never be

confused if insight into that Being is to remain. Its possibilities have to be limited in some way.

By their investigation of problems of mortality and immortality, existence and non-existence, on all the various levels on which those problems may exist, religions provide us with a solution to the problems of time and of duration. There are two main time concepts, that of the East and that of the West. The symbol of the West, the cross, *cancels* time with its horizontal line. The East limits it within the wheel, and *contains* it. Only a religion that insisted upon datability *could* have succeeded in the West, and only a unique incarnation would have solved the problem of defining and so containing a linear time concept. And on this insistence upon datability, both the success and the manifold nature of Christianity were based. Much more than is immediately apparent, the whole Christian system derives from and is implicit in this point. The realization expressed in Northrup's book, far from making either East or West doubt the universal validity of its own concept, has instead led the West, and no less the East as well, to take special pride in the difference. The West takes great pride in living up to its own concept, and this persistence has done much to re-emphasize Christian values. The matter is so basic that it seems likely that the division will persist.



# GLOSSARY

**Agni:** The God of Fire in the *Vedas*, who carries the offerings of men up to the Gods. Also, the inner light within Man, the sunfire of Higher Reality.

**Ahimsa:** Nonviolence in thought, word, or deed.

**Ahura Masdao:** The God of Light of the Zoroastrian pantheon, opposed to Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman.

**Amaterasu:** The Japanese sun goddess of the Shinto pantheon.

**Ameretat:** The Zoroastrian equivalent of amrta, or deathlessness.

**Amida Buddha:** The Japanese form of the Buddha of light and salvation.

**Amrta:** A Sanskrit term literally meaning deathlessness. Usually translated as immortality, conceived first as a fluid substance, later as the idea of deathlessness, in the religious sense of that which is beyond the realm of the corporeal life or death.

**Anatta Doctrine:** The doctrine that since the atman (which see) is incapable of being described, therefore it cannot be said to exist in the sense in which things in the corporeal world exist.

**Angra Mainyu:** The God of Darkness of the Zoroastrian pantheon, opposed and equal in power to Ahura Masdao, the God of Light. Sometimes called Ahriman, and referred to as the poison god.

**Animism:** The primitive belief that everything has a soul, in the animate and inanimate worlds alike.

**Arhat:** A good or holy person; an embodied soul in the state of nirvana, yet still present in the world of men.

**Ashram:** A Hindu semi-monastic school; a settlement of devotees around a teacher.

**Asuras:** Literally, "dark forces." The pre-Aryan, Dravidian divine beings who in Vedic myth personify the forces of evil.

**Atman:** The true "I," the observer of all psychological and physiological reality, of all that happens to the ego, the body, and the self, but beyond them and not acted upon by them; the inner self that is one with Brahman, or the Miracle of Being, but is indescribable and exists apart from any definable ego.

**Avatar:** Literally "descent." The incarnation of a god in human or animal shape. The avatars of Vishnu and of the Buddha are the most widely known.

- Avidya:** The state of unconsciousness in which the soul that has not been awakened to religious existence and so is cut off from a realization of Brahman is said to exist.
- Being of Being:** Or Miracle of Being. A term for the Ultimate, with special reference to contact with it in terms of a realization of the here and now, or existential moment. The Miracle of Being is the supreme religious miracle that we exist at all, which is inexplicable and beyond statement. The Being of Being is the Ultimate realized in terms of that miracle.
- Bhakti:** The doctrine that the correct attitude towards the Ultimate is one of worshipful love and adoration. In its ramifications this attitude spreads all the way from ecstatic contemplation to explicit corporeal love-acts.
- Bodhi:** Spiritual wisdom; knowledge; intelligence; in the sense of enlightenment and insight into the Ultimate.
- Bodhisattva:** A being informed by bodhi; one preparing to become a Buddha; in Mahayana Buddhism, one who, though having attained enlightenment, renounces nirvana in order to help humanity; in Hinayana Buddhism, one who is to become a Buddha.
- Bon:** The primitive, magic religion of Tibet.
- Brahma:** One of the three principal Hindu gods. It is he who creates the world by exhaling it.
- Brahman:** Hindu concept of the Ultimate. As the name would suggest, the Brahman has been achieved by removing an anthropomorphic deity (Brahma) backward to the status of an all-embracing, unborn, all-pervasive first principle, as indeed most Hindu concepts move from the anthropomorphic level to the abstract principle level. Other scholars maintain, on the contrary, that Brahma is the personified neutral essence of the Brahman.
- Brahmanaspati:** Name of a deity who intercedes with the gods for the welfare of mankind.
- Brahmina (Brahmana):** Member of the Brahmina caste, the first of the four chief castes, and the sacerdotal caste whose members may or may not act as priests; works composed for or by the Brahminas.
- Bushido:** The Japanese doctrine that we must, by conquering the ego, adapt ourselves to the way of the world, so that all our acts may be suitable to the circumstances in which they occur, and thus constitute an enlightened form of conduct towards others. It derives from Zen (which see).
- Darsana:** Insight, realizing of the Ultimate, which needs no proof.
- Dasas:** "Slaves." The native tribes who opposed the Aryans in India.
- Deism, Deist:** Belief in a personal God who exerts no influence on men or on the world he has created, but merely exists. One who so believes.
- Devas:** "Bright, shining forces." The demi-gods of the Hindu pantheon who preside over favorable forces.
- Dhamma:** Buddhist equivalent of Dharma (which see).

- Dharana*: A stage of Yoga in which the mind is fixed on one particular object of meditation.
- Dharma*: 1. Justice. 2. Religious or moral duty; a righteous way of life as enjoined by the sacred scriptures.
- Dharmakaya*: Buddhist term for the embodied law. The Buddha as the personification of truth.
- Dhyana*: The seventh stage of Hatha Yoga, that of serene contemplation achieved through meditation. The word, transliterated into Chinese, gave its name to Zen Buddhism.
- Digambara*: The strict sect of Jainas. Literally it means "clothed in the directions of the sky," or naked.
- Durga*: One of the names or identities of the consort of Siva in her fearsome, destructive aspect.
- Ekanta Vada*: A Jainu term for the error of looking at things from one point of view only.
- Fascinosum*: A term devised by Rudolf Otto for the feelings of pleasure, gratification, and joy we experience when we catch a glimpse of the Ultimate, or numen. According to his theory, we never can perceive the numen, or Ultimate, but can know it only through our reaction to it, which is either that of the fascinosum, or of the tremendum, or of a combination of both. (*see* tremendum and numen).
- Gandharvas*: Vedic half-deities of the atmosphere, one of whose duties it was to prepare soma.
- Goheis*: Strips of paper received at Japanese temples in return for offerings, and supposed to insure good fortune.
- Gompa*: A Tibetan monastery.
- Guignefort*: A folksaint of Provençal origin, extra-canonical, and worshipped in the guise of a dog.
- Guru*: A spiritual leader or tutor, whose complete spiritual authority the pupil must accept, as the guru must accept responsibility for the consequences of his pupil's acts as well as for his own.
- Harakiri*: Japanese ritual suicide.
- Hari*: A word usually used to designate the Hindu god Vishnu.
- Hinayana Buddhism*: "The lesser vehicle." The strict sect of Buddhism, which maintains that only the ordained will be saved, and that they will achieve nirvana only by dint of much application, effort, and meditation. Hinayana is the term applied to them by the Mahayana Buddhists. More politely, the Hinayana are termed the Theravada.
- Ikhnaton*: Egyptian Pharaoh who endeavored to establish worship of a universal monotheistic deity.
- Immanence*: The doctrine that God is present all around us, in the phenomenal world.
- Indra*: God of the firmament in the Hindu pantheon. Once of prime importance, he now ranks below Vishnu, Brahma, and Siva, but is chief of the lesser gods.
- Izanagi*: The male primal God and parent of the Japanese Shinto pantheon.



*Jaina*: An enlightened and saved person.

*Jataka Tales*: The popular folklore fables and moral parables revolving round the birth and life of the Buddha.

*Jatavedas*: A vedic epithet for fire.

*Jen*: The Confucian concept of virtue and charity that consists in correct and appropriate social activity within the social group.

*Jiva*: The Hindu concept of the principle of life within us, the living soul.

*Jivanmukta*: A person who, having achieved the highest insight, is saved, but who still lives in the world, even though liberated from samsara and karma.

*Jnana*: Rational knowledge of the phenomenal world.

*Kali*: The Hindu consort of Siva, in her fearsome and bloodthirsty aspect.

*Kami*: A leading or essential person or power possessed of power over mankind. The "divine" forces of the Shinto pantheon.

*Karma*: Literally "action." The law of cause and effect as it applies to the human soul. It is of three kinds: the result of accumulated actions performed in a previous incarnation or incarnations; the events that will happen to one in one's present incarnation, as a result of one's actions in previous incarnations; and the sort of existence one will have in the next incarnation, which is shaped by one's actions in the present one.

*Kismet*: The Mohammedan idea of unalterable and inevitable preordained fate.

*Klesa*: Beclouding passions that hinder the realization of religious insight.

*Koan*: A Zen riddle or problem set to the pupil or disciple, which cannot be solved by intellectual means, but only by intuition.

*Krishna*: The most popular of the avatars of the Hindu god Vishnu, as the God of Love.

*Kwannon (Kuan Yin)*: The Chinese and Japanese goddess of mercy and compassion, an incarnation of Avalokitesvara, one of the primal Buddhas, in female guise.

*Lama*: A Tibetan Buddhist priest.

*Liquid Consciousness*: The shared consciousness of primitive peoples, when individuation has not yet set the personal ego as a barrier against the general mass consciousness and feeling.

*Loka*: All things visible to the eye; the name of the world Brahma remembers and utters, when he breathes forth that world.

*Maghavan*: A name of Indra.

*Mahayana Buddhism*: The greater vehicle. The sect of Buddhism that believes that all souls may be saved, and in its popular form identifies nirvana as an extremely concrete fantasy heaven.

*Mana*: A magic power that resides in things but is not identified with them. A primitive concept of supernatural power, life, and will, which precedes the concept of deities or of a deity, and is dangerous to man.

*Mandala*: A geometric design used for meditation, which usually depicts a spiritual map of the world, and is a visible projection of inner spiritual conditions.

- Manichaeism*: A follower of Manichaeism; a believer in, or the idea that, Man is created by the power of evil, is innately evil by creation, but has the ability to purify himself by self-denial and so become good.
- Mantra*: A formula that, by the power of its sound, creates certain conditions in the world of one's soul, or even in the world around us.
- Mara*: The evil principle. The Hindu god identified, in the *Upanishads*, with Death; in Buddhism, with infatuation.
- Maya*: The world as it was built up in Brahma's mind; unreal and illusionistic by comparison with the kind of reality possessed by the Ultimate.
- Miracle of Being*: The inexplicable fact that we exist at all, as a religious experience of the numen (which see).
- Moksha*: Jaina term for nirvana (which see).
- Nirvana*: The Buddhist state of release from all phenomenal existence, from karma and samsara, from the necessity of storing up future actions, and from the necessity of being reborn; the state of attainment of union with the Ultimate. In later Mahayana Buddhism, the very concrete popular heaven to which saved souls would go after death.
- Nishkama Karma*: The performance of acts that are gratuitous, free from self-interest, and performed because the occasion demands them, with no thought of punishment or reward.
- Niyama*: The second stage of Hatha Yoga, Yama being the first stage. Internal and external purification and observance.
- Numen*: Rudolf Otto's term for the Ultimate, experienced only in terms of our type of reaction to a realization of it, either in the form of the tremendum (which see) or the fascinans (which see).
- Om*: A sacred syllable symbolizing Brahman, used by Hindus and Buddhists. Roughly equivalent to the Christian amen.
- Pabbajja*: Leaving home and all mundane ties in order to become a *sannyasi*, or wandering devotee.
- Pandemonism*: The belief that the world and nature wear a demon or devil mask. The universal presence, in the world that surrounds the primitive man, of the power of mana (which see).
- Pandit*: A learned man or scholar.
- Pantheism*: The doctrine that God is present in all things.
- Paramesvara*: The Supreme Lord, a term used by the Arya Samaj.
- Paramitas*: The six stages of spiritual perfection through which the Bodhisattva must progress in order to attain Buddhahood.
- Parvati*: A name for the consort of Siva.
- Praja Pati*: The Father of Creation.
- Pranayama*: The breathing in and out of the world performed by Brahma. Also the fourth stage of Hatha Yoga, consisting of breathing exercises.
- Pratyahara*: The fifth stage of Hatha Yoga, that of freeing the senses from all objectivity.
- Psychologism*: An irrational belief in the power of Psychology to solve all problems.

- Puja:** Worship.
- Puranas:** "Old." A collection of ancient Hindu stories, written in elaboration of matters mentioned in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*.
- Purusha:** "Person." The eternal original man, a name of Brahma.
- Ram:** See *Hari*.
- Rudra:** The primitive Aryan god of storms, the original of Siva. The red god, the god of sandstorms.
- Samadhi:** Realization of the atman.
- Samana:** Pali equivalent of the Sanskrit sramana. An ascetic who makes an effort to gain salvation.
- Sambodhi:** Supreme enlightenment attained by a Buddhist.
- Samkhya Philosophy:** A dualism that maintains that matter and spirit are separable though interdependent.
- Samsara:** The wheel of endless reincarnation, whereby souls are endlessly reborn and die.
- Sannyasi:** One who has renounced all earthly ties to wander in search of enlightenment.
- Sat Chit Ananda:** "Being, consciousness, bliss." A Hindu formula taken over and enlarged by Sri Aurobindo, to represent the realization of the Being of Being in a state of bliss.
- Satori:** The Japanese Zen state of sudden enlightenment by unexpected, accidental, non-mediated, and sometimes violent means.
- Scholasticists:** The Medieval Church scholars, chiefly St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Albertus Magnus, who attempted to adapt Aristotle's intellectual logic and metaphysics to the purpose of ultimate theological proof.
- Scientism:** An irrational belief in the ability of Science to solve all spiritual, psychological, and physical problems.
- Shibumi:** Japanese Zen concept of chastity or purity, usually expressed as a negative, in that something is not good because it lacks shibumi. Shibumi also has connotations of a tidy, appropriate naturalness.
- Shintai:** Holy objects of Shinto worship, specifically the three magic objects contained in one Shinto temple: a mirror, a string of beads, and a sword, strong in mana, and given by the Shinto Gods to the ancestors of the ruling house.
- Shunyata:** "Emptiness." That which exists beyond existence, and which alone has real validity, but since it is beyond any qualities of existence as we know it, therefore cannot be said to exist. By comparison with this world we call existent, however, it is "nothing." The essence of Mahayana philosophy.
- Siva:** One of the three principal Hindu gods, a development of Rudra, with whom he is sometimes identified (see Rudra). "The destroyer," but in no sense an evil god, for in his character as destroyer, he removes created things, in order that Brahma may create them once again, and so keeps the endless breathing in and out of the world in motion. God experienced as the tremendum.
- Soma:** An intoxicating drink that is also a God, and is thus the means

- used by the gods to make themselves apparent to men, as in communion one partakes of the blood and flesh of Jesus Christ.
- Sramana*: A mendicant, or beggar ascetic or priest.
- Sthula*: The physiological body (as observed by others) of Yoga doctrine, as opposed to the *sukshma* (which see).
- Sukhavati*: The Mahayana Buddhist paradise in the West, identified with nirvana in popular Mahayana Buddhism.
- Sukshma*: The fine, ideal body; what we *feel* to be our real body, as opposed to the *sthula*, or what we outwardly observe to be the body.
- Sura*: A chapter of the Koran.
- Surya*: The Hindu sun-god, with whom Agni is often identified.
- Svadharmā*: One's own prescribed duty in life according to the eternal law of karma. Self-realization by acting in congruence with the karma one has inherited, neither exceeding its potentials and limitations, nor falling below them.
- Svetambaras*: The more liberal sect of Jainas, literally "those dressed in white."
- Svadvada*: The Jaina practice of adding a conditional to all judgments and actions, since nothing is absolute, and we must not damn anything by denying it a hearing.
- Swami*: A master, learned man, or pandit.
- Tabu*: That which is sacred and unmentionable and sacrosanct because of the power, or mana, that resides in it.
- Tankas*: Tibetan Buddhist religious paintings.
- Tantrism*: A form of yoga indulging in excessive, ritual, magic, and sometimes orgiastic acts in an effort to force realization and enlightenment.
- Tao*: A Chinese concept of the Ultimate, the object of Taoist meditation and worship. Usually expressed in terms of nature forces, if it is concretized at all. Literally, "the way," "the highway," "the road," or "the law."
- Taras*: The Tibetan Green and White stars, the two wives of Sron Tsan Gam-po who introduced Buddhism into Tibet, and who are worshipped in consequence.
- Tat*: Hindu (Sanskrit) term for the Ultimate. Unlike the *tao*, it is always left unamplified even by metaphor. It is a sophisticated attempt to achieve a neutral word of reference, rather than a primitive concept.
- Tathagata*: A title of the Buddha used by his followers and also by himself.
- Theodicy*: The study of some means of explaining and vindicating God's justice or injustice in allowing evil to exist.
- Theravada*: The name by which the Hinayana Buddhists call themselves.
- Tirthankaras*: The 24 Jaina elders or prophets.
- Totemism*: Identification of man with various animals or nature forces, of greater power than he, by means of which he becomes invested with that power.

- Transcendentalism*: The doctrine that God is nowhere present in the world as we know it, the world being unreal and nonexistent by comparison with the reality of God and the nature of that higher reality.
- Tremendum*: The reaction to the numen, or Being of Being, or Godhead, that takes the form of awe, horror, fear, or a feeling of being overwhelmed. See *fascinosum*; *numen*.
- Ultimate*: The Ultimate. A term for Godhead, or Being of Being; the Isness of God beyond our ability to define it.
- Vedanta*: The school of Indian philosophy, arising after the period of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, which preached mainly non-dualism, or monism, claiming that Brahma was the only reality.
- Vidya*: Knowledge, in the sense of the realization of the nature of subject and object. Opposed to *avidya*.
- Vishnu*: One of the three principal gods of the Hindu Pantheon, and the symbol of the immanence of Godhead. All the visible world represents Vishnu. Particularly worshipped in his avatar of Krishna. He represents the *fascinosum*, as Siva represents the *tremendum*, aspect of the numen, or Brahman.
- Wu-Wei*: Literally, "not doing," or "not happening." The ideal of unobtrusive behavior, of acts that are neither noticeable or absent. It is not so much a negative as an absence. A Chinese term.
- Yoga*: The discipline whereby the disciple may gain enlightenment. There are two main schools, Hatha Yoga, which provides psycho-physiological training along ascetic lines; and once that is mastered, Raja Yoga, or the development of higher powers by contemplation and meditation.
- Yogi*: A disciple of Yoga.
- Zen*: The Chinese (Chan) and Japanese school of Buddhism that stems from the seventh stage of Hatha Yoga, and maintains contact with the Ultimate by refusing to attempt to define it.

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